

University of Alberta

A Webbed Spiral: A Process of Living Ecologically

by

Carmen Ditzler



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Physical Education and Sport Studies

Edmonton, Alberta

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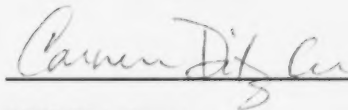
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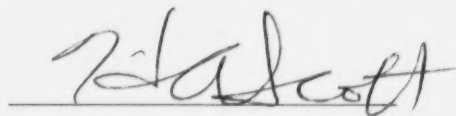
Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it. And then he feels perhaps there isn't.

- A. A. Milne. Winnie-The-Pooh.

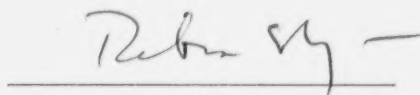
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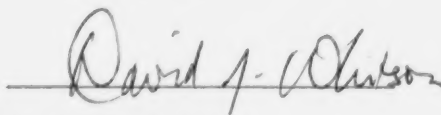
The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled A Webbed Spiral: A Process of Living Ecologically, submitted by Carmen Ditzler in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts



Dr. H. A. Scott



Dr. Debra Shogan



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Dr. Eric Higgs

June 21, 1995

DEDICATION

For the earth....for myself.

ABSTRACT

This piece of qualitative research explores the lives of people who are striving to live ecologically. Using the techniques of observation and interactive interviewing, I explored themes from the lives and experiences of the coresearchers. The stories of the coresearchers show the diversity and richness within their lives. The themes that I chose to explore were, perspectives, evolving way of living, dialectics and paradox, inner and outer processes (caring, questioning, action), levels (individual, local, bioregional and global), relationship to others and satisfactions. Themes from the differing perspectives of each of the coresearchers are interwoven with theoretical writing and ideas. I developed symbols to represent each of the themes and then formed these symbols into a pattern that I refer to as A Webbed Spiral: A Process of Living Ecologically. Through this pattern or model I attempt to show the interrelationships and interconnections within the ever changing process of living ecologically.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is as much my partner Gregory's as mine, for he has shared my learning, frustration and accomplishment. To Harvey (a.k.a. Dr. Vague) Scott, I thank you for your unanswers, your support and your guiding wisdom. Thank you to my committee members Debra Shogan, David Whitson and Eric Higgs for your diverse contributions. My mother-in-law, Geraldine Perry, contributed through her fresh viewpoint and thorough editing. Clyde, my furry companion, I acknowledge as a constant unconditional support that only a dog could give.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER I

The Web Map

Why?.....	2
What It Isn't/What It Is.....	2
Purpose.....	3
The Research Process.....	4
The Coresearchers.....	4
Not a Sample.....	5
Method.....	6
Postmodern Dilemma.....	8
The Analysis.....	10
Style.....	13
Where Am I Taking You?.....	13
Overview of Thesis.....	14

CHAPTER II

The Stories of Spiders

Paula and Roger.....	17
Fred and Dave.....	23
Myron and Donna.....	27
STOP.....	31
Cougar and Emma.....	34

CHAPTER III

Building the Web

Perspectives.....	44
Evolving Process.....	46
Dialectic and Paradox.....	54
Paradoxes.....	55
Dialectices.....	58
Technology.....	63
Inner and Outer Process.....	69
Caring.....	69
Questioning.....	70
Action.....	77
Levels.....	83

CHAPTER IV

Connections Within The Web

Transforming Relationships to Others.....	87
The Cement Box.....	97
Others - Human.....	103
Others - Nature.....	108
Citizen.....	112
Inhabitants.....	114
Satisfactions.....	116

CHAPTER V

Building a Web Within a Web

The Model.....	126
Summary of the Model.....	127
The Garden of Living Ecologically.....	128
Definition.....	130
The Untold Stories.....	131
My Own Web.....	132
Self-Portrait.....	134
One Last Strand of Silk.....	135

REFERENCES.....	136
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APPENDICES

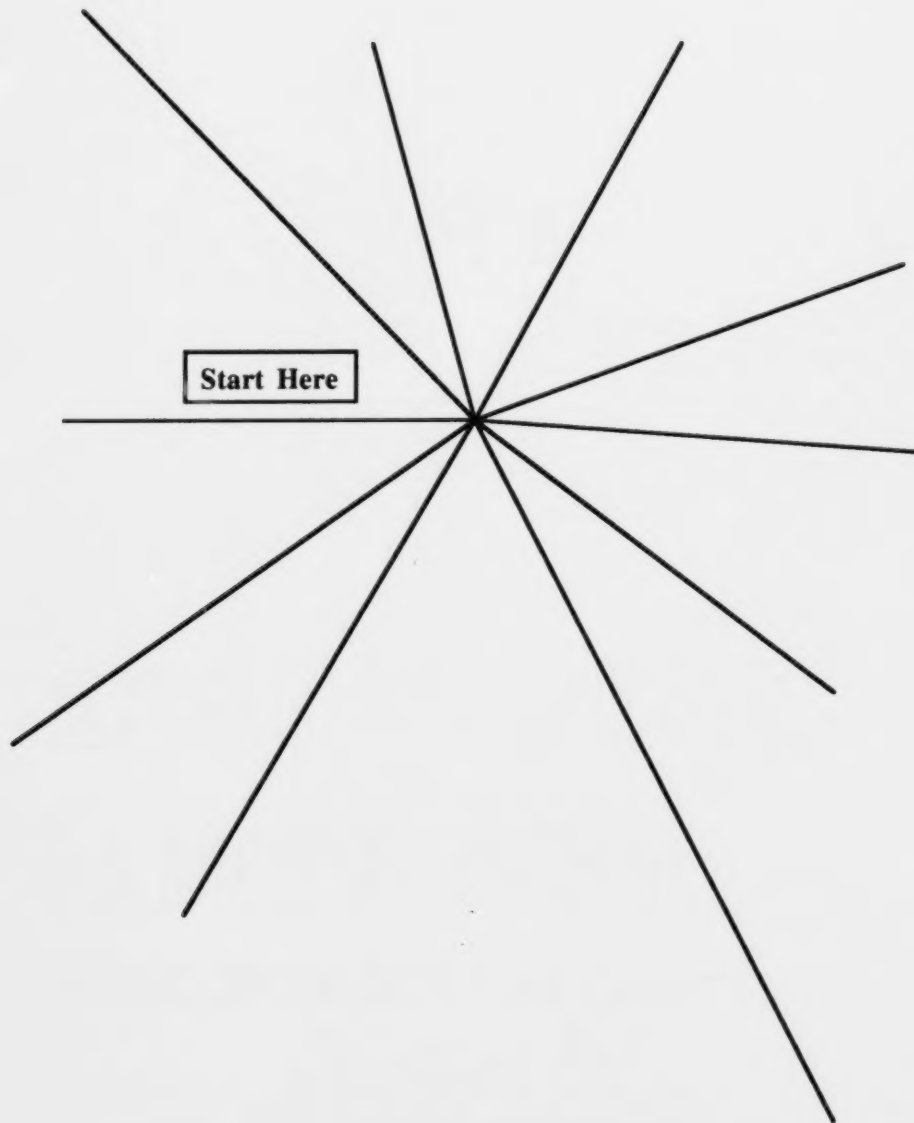
Appendix A Informed Consent Form.....	139
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Perspectives.....	44
Figure 2.	Perspective Lines.....	45
Figure 3.	Evolving Symbol.....	53
Figure 4.	Dialectic and Paradox.....	68
Figure 5.	Caring, Questioning and Action.....	82
Figure 6.	Levels.....	85
Figure 7.	Transforming Relationships to Others.....	115
Figure 8.	Satisfactions.....	124
Figure 9.	Model.....	126
Figure 10.	Self-Portrait.....	134

CHAPTER I

THE WEB MAP



Introduction

Why?

Have you ever stuck your finger in a spider web on purpose or by accident? If you have, you will know that there are very few threads or connections that can be broken or disturbed without threatening the integrity and structure and survival of the web. Break a crucial connection or a number of threads and the web is lost. Think of the earth as a web where everything is connected in a wondrous, intricate design of some unknown pattern. We are in a time of social and ecological upheaval. Human domination of nature through technology, and each other through hierarchies, is rapidly damaging the earth web. The threat of collapse of the web, or actually "hitting the ecological wall" will eventually force humans to act on principles of interconnectedness. I care about the earth and the beings on it. From my outdoor experiences, through reading, thinking and time spent living in a developing country, I have developed eclectic interests and concerns. I have hopes for a world that in the future will become more just for all living things. In an ideal world the plight of others, human and other living creatures and systems, would mean a great deal to us all because we would realize and act upon the importance of the web of interconnectedness. The state of the earth and all its inhabitants dictates quality of life for all, the ultimate survival of the web as we know it.

Significance

There is an urgent need for systematic study of new ways or transformed ways of being in the world. Study and documentation of the experience of ecological living can contribute to this transformed way of being. There has been some theoretical writing about ecological living from within the ideas of deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism and bioregionalism, but very little field study of ecological living has been done. This project explores the lives of people who are attempting to live ecologically. Within my thesis, these real life experiences will interact with theoretical ideas in order to extend theory and practice in this area.

What It Isn't/What It Is

If you have opened these pages to read about "fifty more simple ways to save the earth," you can quit now. Saving the earth is anything but simple. This task is paradoxical, complicated and difficult in a society that encourages us to be in style, buy the perfect product and consume consume consume. If you would rather get a glimpse of people who are attempting to live simple, full, more ecological lives, then continue on. The 'hippies' in the community, the 'strange' woman who rides her bicycle at -20, the people who still have an outhouse and shop at Value Village; these are stories of different perspectives and emancipatory potential within alternative ways of living.

Purpose

So I decided to go and talk to people who are attempting to live ecologically and see what they did and thought. In this thesis my purpose is to describe a variety of different lifestyles in order to show some of the myriad of possibilities for living ecologically/alternatively, and then to explore some of the issues, ideas and themes that come out of my conversations with the coresearchers. In giving you a glimpse into the lives of these people I hope to inspire you to begin to imagine how your life could change. How the world could change. How you could change the way that you think and the things that you do so that the earth is a better place for us to live -insects, plants, animals, people - all living things and systems.

I am an idealist. If at the end of reading my work you say, "This is idealistic!" then you will be right and I will have succeeded. My goal in this work is to link reality with idealism, practice with theory, hope with action - to stimulate your imagination toward "images of a new world".

The Research Process

What is qualitative research anyway?

At one point, not too long ago in academic history, one would have had to write an extensive justification of qualitative research. But post-positivist, or qualitative work has become "legitimate." This is expressed by Denzin and Lincoln (1994 ix)

Where "We're doing science" was once the watchword, scholars are now experimenting with the boundaries of interpretation, linking research to social change, delving into characteristics of race, ethnicity, gender, age, and culture to understand more fully the relationship of the researcher to the research. In various disciplines in various guises, this implicit critique of the traditional worldview of science and quantitative methods is taking place. All of these trends have fallen under the rubric of "qualitative research."

In the above paragraph it is interesting to not that Denzin and Lincoln did not mention characteristics of species along with race, gender etc. Qualitative research possesses strength in its variety and thus becomes difficult to define and that definition has changed over time.

"People both constitute and are constituted by their social world. We contribute to sustaining it as what it is (or changing it); it made us what we have become." (Packer and Addison, 1989 p.20) Within my interest in ecological issues I am interested in what the life experiences and thoughts are of people who are attempting to live ecologically. Thus I set out to explore their worlds, interpret it with myself as the "research instrument" and communicate it to others.

The Coresearchers

In order to explore the experience and process of living ecologically I needed to find people who were doing it. These people are referred to as coresearchers. The coresearchers were "discovered" by me in two ways. The first was by being introduced to them by acquaintances we have in common. The second is that a coresearcher may have introduced me to another potential coresearcher. The coresearchers were selected as having ecological lifestyles using the rather vague criteria of whether or not they lived alternatively in some way. This could be use of alternative energy sources, housing, food sources, work, or activism around environmental issues. Another criteria was whether they did part of their

daily activities using their own energy. As it turned out all of the coresearchers had a combination of these criteria and more.

I contacted the coresearchers by phone, or by going to see them in person, sometimes with an introduction from someone else. I then introduced myself and explained my research project making it very clear that it was important that they not feel obligated to participate. I then asked them to read the Informed Consent Form (Appendix A) and if they were in agreement, asked them to sign it and to write their address on the bottom of the page so that I could send them a copy of the form and also send them a copy of their transcript. At that time I either set up a time to do an informal interview or began the interview. I made it clear at the beginning that they could ask me to turn off the tape at any time or discontinue the interview at any time. The coresearchers are all from the wider Northern Alberta area. At the end of the interview I asked the coresearchers to choose their own pseudonyms. I have done my best to preserve their privacy while trying to provide the reader with a contextualized picture of the way the different coresearchers live. In all I conducted eleven interviews but ended up using only nine of the coresearchers. I decided not to use two of the coresearchers for a few different reasons. One of the coresearchers was excluded because although when I set up the interview I thought that he fit the criteria for living alternatively, it turned out that I had misunderstood. The other interview was with a married couple and although they agreed to participate in the interview they gave one word or one sentence responses, which is of limited use in an indepth qualitative study such as this one. All of the people I spoke with have very busy schedules and I greatly appreciated the time they took to talk openly with me about their lives.

Not A Sample

The coresearchers are not a representative sample, they are all white, primarily middle class and fairly well educated. This group of coresearchers does not include any people of colour or differing ability. Gayatri Spivak (1988) refers to the impossibility and undesirability of an expectation that all can be included under the terms of a common dialogue. "By pointing attention to a feminist marginality, I have been attempting, not to win the center for ourselves, but to point at the irreducibility of the margins in all explanations." (Spivak, 1988 p.107) No matter who I chose as coresearchers there would be people, experiences and species, left outside the explanation. It is upper middle class, white people possessing cultural capital that I wish to speak to. It is this group of people who carry a great deal of responsibility for the impact on the earth. (oops entering a

paradoxical spiral). Even if I interviewed a person from every race, sexual orientation, gender, economic situation, and educational background, the study would never be complete and there would be many perspectives that were not explored. In some ways the coresearchers are marginal, in other ways they are not. However, the "narrowness" of this group does not make what we can learn from them any less valuable. In some aspects they are extremely varied and unique. For every person on the earth there is a different, valuable perspective, but for now I wish to explore the lives, ideas, and dreams of the nine people I interviewed.

Method

I chose to use observations and interactive interviewing to explore the lives of the coresearchers.

Observing:

During the time that I spent with the coresearchers which was anywhere from several hours to several days I was a participant, helping out when and where I could. Part of what I really enjoyed was visiting the coresearchers in their "own environment" and talking with them, and learning from them. I could participate only on a very limited level, somewhere between passive and moderate participation. (Spradley 1980 p.59) This is partly due to the nature of the situation - it is their day to day life and I could never be a complete participant in that. As well, the short period of time that I spent with the coresearchers did not give me enough time to help out with any of the major things that needed to be done. I have come to the conclusion that what I have done is not so much participant observation as it is observation. I had a notebook in which I recorded what I saw, what people said and did, and my interpretations. Observations such as looking at their house and their systems for doing things, supplemented my interviews a great deal. If I had only interviewed I might have learned a great deal about what they said they were doing, not what they actually were doing.

Interactive Interviews:

By observing prior to the interview, and during the interview, I could then ask more specific questions during the conversations to prompt discussion if need be, or to redirect the interview back on track from a tangent. I decided to use interactive interviews because I am interested in what people have to say, not what I want to ask and hear. Reinharz (1992 p.18) discusses some of the characteristics of the interactive interview method. "...including free interaction between the researcher and interviewee...and interview research typically includes opportunities for clarification and discussion." I had areas or

topics that I wished to cover in the interview but no set questions. "...the unstructured research interview employing open-ended questions, because it maximizes discovery and description." (Reinharz, 1992 p.18) The interview was more like a conversation with a tape recorder on the table between us. Thus, the conversation jumped from topic to topic and back again and was for the most part directed by the coresearcher and I together. At points during the interview the coresearchers spent time spontaneously reflecting on their lives and their experiences. "Open-ended interview research explores people's views of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory." (Reinharz, 1992 p.18) The transcripts from the interviews are interesting because they document a conversation and conversations are not linear and do not stay on topic for very long. I found it beneficial to remain patient and stick with the conversation during tangents that are sometimes just as relevant, or more interesting, than the original conversation. It seemed that eventually we talked about most of what I was interested in and more. Each different coresearcher talked about different things, (in more or less depth) than others and with emphasis on different aspects of their lives. "Open-ended interview research produces nonstandardized information that allows researchers to make full sense of differences among people." (Reinharz, 1992 p.19) Making full sense of the data is another story as you will see in the analysis section.

When possible I interviewed partners (or husbands and wives) together and separately. I felt that it was important to interview them separately because in many respects they have very different lives. I wanted to hear each person's own perspective. I think that this turned out to be a very good idea. The interviews were very different and I was able to gain a sense of partners different roles and different experiences. Reinharz, (1992 p.40) talks about the importance of interviewing partners separately and privately. I think that each individual had a greater opportunity to talk about his/her own activities and from his/her perspective, when we were alone than when their partner was present. During my visit I had a chance to see them interacting as well as speak with each of them individually.

It was important to me to develop non-hierarchical relationships and to connect with other people in my research. Reinharz addresses this; "Interviewing is also consistent with many women's interest in avoiding control over others and developing a sense of connectedness with people. This idea of abdicating control comes through in...respondents being "actively involved" and constructing data about their lives." (Reinharz, 1992 p.20) This research was not a one sided venture. I enjoyed visiting with the coresearchers and I think that they enjoyed spending time with me and talking about how they live. I feel that I was

part of "...non-exploitive relations with the people involved..." (Reinharz, 1992 p.267)
This situation was one of "Relations of respect, shared information, openness, and clarity of communication." (Reinharz, 1992 p.267) Talking to people takes theory and anchors it in something real.

Postmodern Dilemma

This thesis is writing based on observations and interviews. It is not ethnography but I learned a great deal and raised a variety of questions by thinking, reading about and questioning ethnographies. John VanMaanen writes about "tales of the field";

My use of the folksy term, "tales" to refer to ethnographic writing...I use the term quite self-consciously to highlight the presentational or, more properly representational qualities of all fieldwork writing. It is a term meant to draw attention to the inherent story-like character of fieldwork accounts, as well as to the inevitable choices made by an author when composing an ethnographic work. This does not, of course, imply that ethnography is mere fiction or that the whole world must be put between quotation marks. I only mean that writing is something writers do, and it stands at least one-off from what is written about. There is no direct correspondence between the world as experienced and the world as conveyed in a text, any more than there is a direct correspondence between the observer and the observed. (Van Maanen, 1988 p.8)

If I ask you to think of alternative living as a "different culture" then the following quote will help to illustrate my point. "The trick of ethnography is to adequately display the culture (or, more commonly, parts of the culture) in a way that is meaningful to readers without great distortion." (VanMaanen, 1988 p.13)

As a fledgling researcher just trying my wings, perched on the edge of the precipice, it is a difficult time to be writing. We are in a time which some would refer to as postmodernism where everything is up for question. "...the pendulum seems to point us toward a mirror in which we appear to be unclothed and turning over and over our own understandings of fieldwork for inspection." (VanMaanen, 1988 p.138)

Richardson (1994) defines the postmodern dilemma as such;

The core of postmodernism is the doubt that any method or theory, discourse, or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the "right" or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truths claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles. But postmodernism does not automatically reject conventional methods of knowing and telling as false or archaic. (Richardson, 1994 p.517)

Researchers seems to be at a time where what we know, how we know it and how we write it, is all up for questioning. What I put in my thesis and what I leave out becomes

problematic. In my readings of how to write, during which I thought my time would be better spent writing, I began to spiral down into a pit of paralyzation. Then I came across this sentence written by Laurel Richardson. "...a postmodern position does allow us to know "something" without claiming to know everything." (Richardson, 1994 p.518) What I claim to know about is something about a small portion of the lives of nine people who are in some way living ecologically. "Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that our Self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it - but only partially present, for in our writing we repress parts of ourselves, too." (Richardson, 1994 p.520) I did begin this project with my own ideas and notions and background - it is impossible not to;

...in interpretive research, theory building is a co-constitutive process; the researcher begins with preunderstandings that affect how he or she perceives the world and selects "data." Theory must be built not just from the bottom up, but hermeneutically co-constituted in a dialogical manner that involves much self-reflection by the researcher. (Packer and Addison, 1989 p.42)

I did not go about my research in order to prove myself right but to learn about the lives, ideas and experiences of my coresearchers. Thus this writing is about my coresearchers and their lives and it is about me and my own unique goals, perspective and choices. Goals such as I want to explore and show different ways of living in the world, on the earth. Perspectives, such as my concern about the environmental/cultural crisis. I made choices as to who I interviewed, what books I read and what issues/themes to address in this piece of writing.

By telling our stories and telling them over in different ways, we are admitting to those we trust that our goals are not necessarily fixed, that we are never free of doubt and ambiguity, that our strategic choices in fieldwork are often accidental, that for our data to be meaningful requires development over time, and that we are far more dependent on the people we study than we can know or say. The rub, of course, is that by such an admission we must recognize that we are flying by the seat of our pants much of the time. There is risk here but there is also truth." (VanMaanen, 1988 p.120)

This thesis is an attempt to communicate my learning and questions to others. I started with some questions but more developed as I went along. As is usually the case in research, I generated more questions than answers.

The Analysis

After the interviews were completed I began transcribing the tapes. This is arduous, time consuming work. Some of the uniqueness of oral communication was brought to my attention during the transcription process. Most of the coresearchers would jump from one thought to the next sometimes without completing the first one. Many sentences in the transcript go on forever as the speaker skips from one idea to the next and back again. I found it difficult to represent, in words, the full meaning of what was articulated and understood at the time. Reinhartz (1992) speaks of a British psychologist Liz Kelly who says, "Meaning in the spoken word is often conveyed through gesture, tone of voice, and emotional expression" (p.40)

When the transcripts were completed I used a function on the computer that prints continuous line numbers in the left hand margin. These line numbers were useful in keeping track of where specific quotes or ideas were in pages and pages of transcript. In analyzing the transcripts I bracketed sections of text that referred to a specific idea and then created a category. I wrote the central idea for that category (a label) in the margin and then on a master sheet. For each idea or quote that fit into a category I would then write the initial of the coresearcher who said it and the corresponding line numbers from the transcript. I then continued to create new categories for a new idea or else determined whether that idea fit into an already existing category. Thus, the categories came from the data itself rather than those that I made up. This process of categorizing the information from the transcripts was necessary in order to provide some coherence to a dialogue that skipped from topic to topic and back again. It also made me intimately familiar with the text. By the end of the analysis I could often find a specific idea from memory without referring to the line numbers! After analyzing all of the transcripts I placed each different category or theme on an index card. There were over one hundred different index cards. I then played a massive shuffling game to organize which themes could be grouped together, as many of them had larger themes in common. I then wrote the organizing themes in different colour markers on a large sheet of paper, taped it to the wall above my desk and stared at it. This organizational process helped to make sense of a large amount of data. This process was also frustrating because everything that the coresearchers think and do and experience is an interconnected part of their living. In other words, although the information is divided into discrete categories, it is important to realize that all of these categories are interrelated and overlap.

Writing about the process that I used makes it all seem so simple and straight forward. But it is anything but a linear process. It is more a circular, convoluted process which can be very difficult to make sense of.

The purpose of recording and analyzing field notes is to make sense of the participant's world by organizing one's understandings and preunderstandings of the participants' understanding of their world into a cohesive, narrative account. This happens not in discrete, linear steps, but rather in, uneven, circular, and often unpredictable fits and starts. (Packer and Addison, 1989 p.44)

To further complicate matters, the themes from the transcripts were interacting with theoretical ideas, writings from other authors and my own ideas and preconceptions. The result was a seething mass of chemical reaction in my head, similar to the effect one gets when you combine vinegar and baking soda. Another problem is that the reaction slows down. I felt like a coffee pot on low heat; the ideas were percolating. Richardson views writing as a method of inquiry. "I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it. I was taught, however, as perhaps you were too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organized and outlined." (1994 p.517) I too thought that I should know what I wanted to say before I wrote. So I struggled. I wrote in disjointed, nonlinear ways, drew pictures, woke up in the middle of the night and scribbled down ideas. I fingerpainted, sewed a quilt and cleaned house in an effort to "give birth" to something that made sense. Richardson argues for an alternative perspective and critiques the model of knowing before writing as consistent with quantitative work but not with qualitative.

The model has serious problems: It ignores the role of writing as a dynamic, creative process; it undermines the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research is inconsistent with the writing model; and it contributes to the flotilla of qualitative writing that is simply not interesting to read because adherence to the model requires writers to silence their own voices and to view themselves as contaminants. (Richardson, 1994 p.517)

So from the outside it looked like nothing was happening. According to the traditional model of writing; nothing was happening. My thinking was not linear it was circular. So how could I write, since a written work is linear? So instead of writing I developed a variety of symbols to represent the themes or interacting processes. I had all the components of the model that you will eventually see, but it was not making sense. Then one day it was like the lights came on in my head and the heat was turned to high. It was "cooked" and the coffee bubbled over onto the stove. I decided that the thematic analysis was too reductionist - that I had separated the parts into pieces that were less than the whole. It was too hard to adequately represent the lives of the coresearchers with small

parts. I wanted to use the coresearchers own words as much as possible to illustrate their experience, rather than attempting to paraphrase and summarize an experience which is not my own. It made sense to use one of the strengths of open-ended interview research which is that, "...interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher." (Reinharz, 1992 p.19) So I went back through the transcripts and pulled out "chunks" of text that expressed central ideas. Many of those "chunks" contain enough themes to create another whole thesis - and that is what makes the data "rich and thick". I then used the model that had emerged to organize the "chunks". I glued these "chunks" together with my own words and added in thoughts of others and pieces of theory, to weave a web that I believe illustrates some of the intricacy, complexity and many layers of the process of living ecologically.

Style

Richardson, in her critique of the traditional writing model also begins to address the notion of style or voice in writing. She laments the fact that many qualitative research texts are boring, difficult to read and even more difficult to finish reading.

One reason, then, that our texts are boring is that our sense of self is diminished as we are homogenized through professional socialization, through rewards and punishments. Homogenization occurs through the suppression of individual voices. We have been encouraged to take on the omniscient voice of science, the view from everywhere. (Richardson, 1994 p.517)

I do not want my writing to be boring or detached. I chose to research living ecologically because I feel it is important. I want to make a difference. "Qualitative work could be reaching wide and diverse audiences, not just devotees of the topic or the author. It seems foolish at best, and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author's career." (Richardson, 1994 p.517) So my voice is not the detached, off-camera narrator, it is a voice from here, interacting with the voices of the coresearchers and with other thinkers and writers. My style is not traditionally academic, but hopefully will contribute in some small way to academic thinking.

We as sociologists, have important insights that we should be sharing with lay people, but we are using the language of "science" and therefore of isolation. Does this mean producing watered down and less accurate versions of our work? Do complexity of thought and precision of expression have to be sacrificed in order to share what we know? Would the use of a more open language undermine our membership and blur the boundaries of our identity? Or would we find that in sharing our understanding was widened and our standing enhanced? (Heather, 1993 p.7)

My style is understandable, hopefully interesting and may make a difference in the way you view the world.

Where Am I Taking You? The Exploration Of Webs

I receive a great deal of inspiration from the struggle of the people of South Africa. The situation in South Africa is changing politically and socially and has been an incredible tribute to the vision of social change. The example of South Africans and their supporters has shown me that change is possible and incredibly difficult! Mzwakhe Mbuli is a black South African songwriter, storyteller and singer. He wrote and tells the chant "Voice of Reason." His words are full of anger, hope and the search for justice.

*listen to the voice of reason
words of wisdom have to be uttered
a better world have to be built
listen to the voice of reason
now is the time to unchain their minds
now is the time to unchain their hearts
images of a new dream
images of a new society should emerge
harken the voice of reason....*

-Mzwakhe Mbuli (1993)

The African National Congress with Nelson Mandela at the helm has been elected. The problems in South Africa and around the world are by no means over but there is room once again for hope and a vision of a new world.

What does South Africa have to do with living ecologically? Everything, it is all a matter of point of view and connectedness. From a tunnel vision point of view, South Africa has nothing to do with me and my life. From a wider vantage point, the injustices of the world, the interconnectedness of all people and living things makes South Africa, and all the earth, mean a great deal to me.

The people that I listened to during my research have 'unchained their minds and hearts', they have images of a new way of living and in their own lives are going about the building of a new world. In my telling of their stories I have chosen themes or questions or issues that are relevant to the challenge of attempting to live ecologically. This is a complex and many layered process.

Overview of Thesis

I have organized the thesis chapters in a way that I feel illustrates the process of living ecologically. Enter the web with me - the coresearchers have built lives that fit where they live. In Chapter II, I explore their webs as stories as if they are different kinds of spiders. Next, in Chapter III, I explore the building of webs starting with the variety of perspectives the coresearchers began with and have now, followed by the idea of the evolving nature of living ecologically. Along the way there are paradoxes and dialectics that the coresearchers have to deal with- interconnections and tensions. What goes on inside a spider when they are building a web? Building a web is an inner process of caring and questioning and an outer process of action. These inner and outer processes occur on different levels. In

Chapter IV I move on to explore the idea of transforming relationships to others- the connections within the webs- the relationships to nature, to other humans, animals, to our selves. How are other beings involved or related to? And then in Chapter V comes the question that we can only answer for ourselves- what now? How does one start building a web and where does it go? Imagine that you have been given magic glasses that help to make visible some of the connections and processes in building a web- in living ecologically- special web glasses. Put on your special web glasses and enter a webbed spiral.



CHAPTER II

THE STORIES OF SPIDERS

There are many different kinds of spiders that build a huge variety of webs. Think of the coresearchers as spiders building webs that fit with where they live. From my own observations, perceptions and conversations with the coresearchers I will try to give you a glimpse of their lives- their webs. In quoting from the transcripts I inserted punctuation that best represents the meaning of the sentence. The perceptions, observations and quotes that compose the stories are not necessarily in the order in which they occurred but I have arranged them in an order that creates, I believe, an adequate picture.

Paula and Roger

It was a very cold and wintery day when I drove to the home of Paula and Roger. I turned off the highway into a tunnel of snow that in another season would be a country road with wide open views. Several miles later I turned the truck into a curving driveway and into their yard. The day I visited, the house was very comfortable with the warm air from the airtight stove and from the sun shining in the windows. Roger and I talked about what he does, how he lives, drank tea, ate lunch and then went out to see the cows. Paula came home from work a few hours later and I had a chance to talk with her. As we are sitting down to talk Paula gets her knitting, saying, "Do you mind if I knit? I like to make good use of my time." Our voices on the interview tape are accompanied by the rhythmic clicking of knitting needles.

The yard is a clearing in the trees, with scattering of buildings and sheds. When I look closely I see that the stack of straw bales in front of me is really a car garage. It has a piece of canvas that rolls down as a door and the thickness of the bales holds in the heat of the car so it's easier to start in the morning. The next building is a pole structure with a tin roof, no walls, that holds stacks and stacks of split wood. Next to the wood shed are straight, straight stacked rows of wood. The wood is split and of uniform lengths. Whoever made it obviously did it with attention to detail. There is a web of narrow interconnecting paths shovelled through the snow, radiating out from the porch of the house. A well used path to the north of the house leads to the outhouse and next to the outhouse the compost pile. Another shorter path goes from the porch to the hand pump, south of the house and branches off to head to the cattle pens and hay shed. A moderate size solar panel is leaning against the south wall of the house to catch as many winter rays of sun as possible. I take the path from the driveway, past the straw garage to the porch. Roger is standing in the doorway waiting for me. The porch is a storage area, space for a propane two burner stove, a place for boots and acts as an air lock to keep the precious warm air in the house and the cold air outside. We go into the main portion of the house. My first impression is one of simple order. There are two main areas downstairs. The first area is kitchen, eating, sitting, working, chatting area. There are cupboards along the north wall and a wood cookstove to the west. "The stove, the stove was a little harder to get. I had to advertise in the paper and a woman had a bunk house, her husband had a sawmill and she used to cook for the workers and she had two stoves that were the same brand so I bought both of them and then cannibalized them and put them together for one that works

and I thought, oh this'll make do and that's twenty years ago and we've still got this one. (laughs) She said, "Well let's see, I'll sell ya the two for \$35.00 " and it was my birthday so she said "well then I'll sell 'em to you for \$25.00." (laughs) So that's nice. And it's really hard to imagine buying a \$2000.00 replacement. You know this thing just keeps on burning and cookin' for awhile longer." (Paula 467-476) The table and chairs are next to the south windows so that the sun shines in and adds to the warmth of the stove. There are a few tall cupboards holding dishes and other items. The other room holds the air tight wood heater. This stove heats the upstairs through a hole in the floor directly above it. This room is where the books, desk, computer and solar energy system are kept. The stairs leading upstairs are steep with a closet underneath for coats. "...if you live in a small house like this there's really not enough room for stuff unless you use it. But I'm sure that we could get rid of three-quarters of this stuff and still make it quite easily.....There's a lot of things that are very durable for a long time that we don't realize unless we just hang on to you know things like, utensils that you could have for ages, I have things that my great-grandmother had and I don't know when she got them, in the '20s or something that I still use in the kitchen. and clothing that I've gotten. I've had shirts or sweaters for twenty five years and I still wear them." (Paula 272-279) It is a small compact house designed to be functional and efficient.

Paula told me the story of how they ended up where they are now. "Uh let's see, I was going to art school, I'll go way back, in California and in the 60's and decided to leave California because I felt that people were too paranoid and it was.... This was during the Vietnam war with protesters and it was just not comfortable to do things, to get on with your life because of this overwhelming sense of paranoia people had about the state. So I moved to the east coast of the United States and lived there and eventually moved to Canada in 1970 and lived in the city of Montreal in a warehouse with no hot water and fairly hand to mouth existence. We always had money for rent which was \$100 a month including utilities but often we collected bottles to buy food and we used to go around to garbage cans in the city and collect things that were useful- things that we still have, like stationery and envelopes, from printing companies and fabric from a hand weaver who made um upholstery material. I used to make quilts out of the hand woven wool. We decided that we, although Montreal is a very nice city very cosmopolitan, that we would leave and move someplace that was undesirable. You know, undesirable in that is wasn't a popular place to go to like British Columbia, so the choice was Newfoundland or Alberta (laughs). That's not very nice, but...and we chose Alberta and moved here in 1973 we were looking for land. We had lived in a cabin in Connecticut and decided that we wanted

to live in the country again because neither of us had intentions of any sort of job/career, we just wanted to make do, and make enough money so that we could do the sorts of things that we wanted to do which were maybe arts and crafts would maybe describe it at the time. But we didn't have the, too many things that we had to buy so our cash flow was usually minimal especially if we could buy a place, that way we wouldn't have to pay rent. So we found this piece of property after about a year and a half of looking. It was a little over our price range, but we bought it knowing that it was inflated and we built this house with telephone poles that were being auctioned off, this was when Alberta was going underground with their phone system. So all the co-ops were selling their phone poles and we bought them, had them squared up at a local sawmill. Built this place. It's still not finished after twenty years but we're sort of accustomed to it. (laughs) " (Paula 5-35)

Roger told me the story of how they built the house. "Well this is it, it was within our means and....I don't think I got to putting the foundation in until midsummer, It's just a footing with nothing underneath and there just so happened to be an auction listed, I noticed in the paper, soon after or thereabouts where there were power poles, telephone poles being auctioned not too far away, so I went there and as luck would have it I bought some power poles I should say again, telephone poles cause the AGT then was going underground that's why they were being auctioned. And with those I then started putting up rounds of logs, the telephone poles then became the logs of the building. And, through other contacts I heard of other materials that were, that I could get a hold of, there was a little lumber yard in C____ that doesn't exist anymore that was out of business and the owner who was actually the son of the original owner had a lot of old inventory in back, and I had heard about, was told about this place and went there and searched the guy down, he then let me in, unlocked the door and allowed me to peruse the place and that's where I got the window sashes and the window casings and the other materials like the stair treads and so forth that um...that I bought. At the same time there was a fella who was tearing down an old outbuilding that he had with lots of spruce lumber, spruce boards and I used those boards on the roof so much of the house was built out of, it's not scrap material, it's old, older material. The porch is made out of the old G____ grain elevator that was built in 1912 when the railway was built here. Remarkable thing is that the, to give you an idea as to where we are now as to where things were in the past is that the grain elevator and the annex and the office are, were built out of heartwood lumber, the grain is select, what we would consider now to be select grade lumber" (Roger 370-393) "But, we never got power and in those early years everything that was built if it wasn't cut with a chainsaw then it was cut with a handsaw, most of what put into the house was done

by hand. and we had kerosene and it wasn't until about ten years ago that we got solar lights, solar powered lighting system. That was not because we intended and made plans to convert it was that I loaned my truck to a fella who went to obtain some batteries for himself and...to pay me back for the favour, he came back with an excess of batteries, the remainder of which he gave to me that he didn't need. So I had these batteries that I had to put to use so through that gift, through that offer we then decided to, we were getting a little tired of kerosene and then we bought some solar panels and wired up the batteries and.....We've, been living a different life now as a result, keep longer working hours. But aside from some labour saving conveniences like a chainsaw and a vehicle we were living much like people of a generation ago up here. We had a telephone that was not a necessity, I don't care for a telephone but the cost to have it installed was so low it was hard to turn up, turn down, I'm sorry, turn down. So we've always had a telephone....Before it was a simple service fee, a service charge. " (Roger 410-424)

I asked them about the tasks that they do throughout the year. Paula told me about her work which involves driving into town most days to work as a research assistant. She spends time as well networking with other activists and working on local environmental issues, community issues and court cases. Paula reminisced about how she got started in activism. "The first group that I became active in when I lived here was the disarmament group and we were opposed to the cruise missile testing. And I was trying to think when that first cruise missile was maybe in '82 or '84. So we went up the Fort McMurray highway and protested on the highway and stopped vehicles and we did this in conjunction with Greenpeace when they had their cruise catcher. This big net they hung from balloons. And we were out on the highway and watched the cruise missile fly over us, with the tracker planes and it was a very eery feeling, to all of a sudden over the tree tops this big silver uh bullet comes. It's kind of quiet, it's....it's very sinister. And we're so fortunate in North America, we're privileged not to be in these wars and you think, at the time I thought of people who have this happening to them constantly- this military threat. So I was involved in this disarmament group and became interested in local planning issues." (Paula 144-156)

Paula also works on their farm. "Let's see, so if we start with spring, I find time to help where necessary if we're going to do any seeding, and I prepare the garden and whatever else has to be done with the animals. And then in the summer I help with making hay and cutting the grass, which we feed to the animals, which is pretty time consuming. Gardening. and fall we're then in harvest and throughout helping out with the livestock but

I'm not really helping on the farm as much as I used to. So that's pretty well what I do. " (Paula 83-89) "I have a pretty intensive garden, and we don't have a root cellar so right now, we still keep our potatoes and onions and some carrots that made it through this far but I try to grow most of the things that I can save. I've had no luck with say tomatoes, they usually get frost way before they're ready. I grow a lot of herbs and I grow things that I can freeze and I use a friend's freezer, peas and beans and beets are usually what I freeze. The garden is fairly large, but it's raised beds so it doesn't take too much space. I grow a lot of onions and garlic and herbs because I use those a lot ." (Paula 93-100)

Roger works on their farm full time and his "routines" depend on the seasons. "I do a lot of routine work. There's a winter routine and there's a routine for other times of the year. In the winter it's basically the maintenance of the cattle....as soon as it's daylight in the winter because it's such short daylight hours, I go out and feed them. I clean up their bedding, clean up their manure which I fork into a pile and that pile accumulates. And it's quite a size by spring. It's nothing out of the ordinary it's just a matter of them having their basic requirements, their bedding, their feed and their water. And it takes about three hours of day for the cattle to look after them and I go out three times a day. So that's an ongoing thing no matter what the weather is. ...I pump their water by hand. I have a little building, temporary building that I make with straw bales. It's an enclosure, it keeps the weather out so while I'm pumping I'm out of the wind in there. I fill up pails which I then pour into the stock tank and then occasionally, particularly when the weather's cold, I heat that stock tank up to keep the water from freezing. So that's the real routine. ...there is the matter of keeping the house warm because we burn wood. So that's an ongoing activity is to keep the fire stocked, the fire banked up and that also depends upon the weather, if it 's real cold out I have to pay a little more attention to keeping the house warm than I would be if it's a little nicer day because we do have the windows on the south and when the sun is shining it gets warm to the degree that I really don't have to let the fires burn all day" (Roger 2-25)

In between caring for the cattle, he shovels snow, cuts or splits firewood or reads. "I'll be out cutting firewood, and splitting firewood and I really enjoy that activity. It's just part of the season and I like to be at least a year ahead in firewood. Normally I'd be about three years ahead cause I have such a good shed and I like to keep it well stocked. It's like money in the bank. Someone once told me; it's security to know you've got firewood in reserve." (Roger 21-31) "I 've got wood now that has been cut that's ready to split and I should split that while it's still on the cold side before it gets warm. (it splits easier when it's cold.) ...It's a pleasure. When things are working in your favour it's a pleasure. So you try ta, the object is to try to work with the weather and not try to do something that goes against the characteristics of the weather. That's like trying to fight the impossible."

(Roger 53-60) Roger adjusts his work and his routines to work with the season and also to work with the weather. "I guess when you're outdoors all the time like I am, and everything is outdoor living, basically. You're very cognisant of the fact that....that weather is either working with you for what you want to do at the time or it isn't. And when you get nothing but endless rain there's very little activity that you can do when it's like that unless you're the kind of person who likes to go fishing and I don't know how to fish so I don't. (laughs)" (Roger 324-329) Roger also told me about calving, building projects, fence repair, cleaning out fencelines, repairing machinery, cutting grass, planting trees, ploughing land, seeding, haying, harvest, selling yearlings and his many other tasks. He talks about being flexible, doing more than one thing at a time and about juggling tasks. "But still in the spring you're still limited to the choice of activities, but if you can repair things, if you can engage in some building projects, you've got a head start, you've got a jump on the year. Because, a lot of projects then, would then have to wait once you get engaged in your farming activities, if you have spring seeding that takes priority. and during haying that takes priority. So it's a matter of doing things when it's the best time to do them. And I think that's one secret that things operate as smoothly as possible." (Roger 163-169)

Paula and Roger told me some things that illustrate what some of their philosophies are- what principles they use to guide their life. "I always enjoyed the saying 'waste not want not'." (Roger 629) "We really don't take the easy way, there's been a lot of temptation. And I guess that you have to have a certain sense of denial or strength to not do things in a conventional manner. I guess with me, outside of my daily living there's not a whole lot, I mean, what I do I try to do consciously to try and save. It used to be out of necessity from not having the wherewithal to purchase, what would be a lot easier, straightening nails for example, using salvaged nails. Using salvaged wire rather than going out and buying clean, shiny new barbed wire. Things like that." (Roger 606-613) Roger has many talents and skills and does most things for himself. "But I think if a person is somewhat self-reliant the country is really the place to be, in a rural area. If you're not afraid of work, if you're self-reliant," (Roger 597-599)

Paula's ideas fit in with the idea of "waste not want not". She talked to me a lot about how she questions things and tries to apply it in her own life. "...not to be an over-consumer is probably the most important to me. It's probably sort of a real Calvinist idea that you're very moderate in your, in everything you do and you'll get by. So if you don't go off on fads or tangents or binges I guess that you can be pretty stable and be able to react very

rationally. But that's a thought and I'm not sure if it still holds true or not? ...but I would say that if you're fairly careful about everything that you do and question everything you do then you'll feel confident that you've done the best you can if that's what you wanna do and that's what I wanna do. As far as being a consumer, one thing that I've noticed and I haven't been very good at it is that when you, when you have to dispose of your own garbage, you're aware of the kinds of things you get at the grocery store and the packaging is just overwhelming. Even when you think that you're not buying a lot you look at the stuff that you can't burn in the stove and that you can't get rid of any way. It really confines your buying." (Paula 179-192) Paula told me a story about Roger in town shopping. "Roger said he went into the hardware store about a year ago and he said to the woman, a new woman that was there, 'I don't need a bag.' and the owner of the store said 'You know he's been shopping here since 1974 and I've never seen him take a bag.' (laughs) That's kinda nice. And most people know now..." (Paula 249-253) Paula also questions people she spends time with. "So then somebody from where I work tells me about the bargains they get at someplace like Cost-co then I say, 'Well I personally would never shop at Cost-co because I prefer to buy locally. They're hiring local people to wait on you, they know your name, they know everything about you, there's an interchange and that's something that you can't get at some discount store and what is the real price that you're paying for everything? You're paying for people not being employed and you're paying for the present crisis that we have globally.' So quite often people just don't want to talk to me. (laughs). I'm like a big wet burlap bag on a fire. I really dampen their spirits." (Paula 205-214) Later in listening to her, she explained, "I don't really mean to be negative, I think it's more being realistic, from my perspective." (Paula 424-425)

Fred and Dave

One spring evening I went over to a one bedroom basement apartment in Prairie City to spend some time with Fred and a friend who is visiting him, Dave. Fred lives in the city in his apartment and Dave lives in a small cabin on some land west of the city. These two friends work together on a vision that they have for what they call the Green Community. Right now Fred works at managing his business and putting money toward the Green Community project. The apartment furnishings are simple and functional. There is a map of their land and a plan of the future Green Community on a bulletin board for inspiration. Fred is hoping to get out of his business in the next couple of years and live and work full time on the Green Community project, but right now he is attempting to live alternatively in

the city. Fred tells me about his early interests and that after high school he decided not to go to university because he felt there would be too many restrictions there. "...so after school, my idea was to save money for a couple years and build a utopian sort of little fortress. And continue my interest in science and continue on a different path. I decided then that university was not the answer for me because I felt there was too much restriction, in that environment. I felt that a lot of things that I wanted to learn weren't being taught there, or weren't being valued there." (Fred/Dave 37-42) "So I went to work and ended up being in business, not really by design I just kind of fell into owning my own business, and kind of ended up that way. So... nine years later I still own my own business and have been really pretty successful and it's done really well. My business now employs twenty people it's gone through some tough times too. So I still have some... I don't wanna just walk away from that. I still feel responsible towards, you know, what's there and wanna do well with, continue doing well with the business." (Fred/Dave 45-52) Fred sees reducing the amount of money he spends as having a variety of effects. "Just the strongest things I do are to- one could measure, well one way a person could measure the amount of consumption that they go through per month is based on the cost of living per month. Just about a direct relationship- by the amount it costs a person or a family to live per month and how much they're consuming. The less it costs, a family per month the less they're consuming so. (sighs) Yeah, I'm still learning ways to cut my living cost, not so much because I want to cut living costs but because it does make more money available for the Green Community Project but it also- I realize it has a direct correlation with how much I'm consuming. So yeah, being more careful with what I eat, not only for consumption reasons but for health reasons. Try to buy food locally so you know that there hasn't been a big pile of gas consumed or diesel consumed to transport food from California. Try to think about that as much as possible. Stay away from overly packaged food and products. Buy good quality clothes so I don't buy clothes as often and even a first for me, starting to look more and more at buying used. Used books, used clothing. I'm starting to do that, over the year that's been a real change for me. So I buy hardly any new clothes now. Very few." (Fred/Dave 100-115)

Dave is presently living on the land that has been purchased for the Green Community project. "It's a real small shack I live in 16 X 10- it's wood heated." Carmen: What did you build it out of? "Dave: We built it. Oh we bought, the basic supplies, wood from the supply store. It's kind of funny. Starting out it was meant to be a storage shed and the carpenter and I got to thinking wild ideas and said well let's insulate it and fix it up a bit and we'll live in it. So that's what it turned into be. (laughs)" (Fred/Dave 293-299)

Dave is in the process of experimenting with different options and figuring out what works best for his particular situation. "I'll go to the market in the summertime, I really like supporting the local Farmer's Market. Produce in peak season. It's harder in the wintertime. Something that I'd really like to try and that's even a step farther even than locally, which is a big one, and that's eating seasonally. Like when you think about native cultures anywhere in the world, they ate locally and seasonally. They ate what they could find that season or what was locally in the bioregion. And it's pretty hard, you know here we are getting fruits and vegetables from California that we, personally I don't think we really need we can live without. We've been so used to it so caught up in it. But you know I'll go run out and buy some myself and eat it because I do like it. But we're slowly trying, I'm slowly trying to get away from that and I've noticed that when I'm in the country more it's a lot easier to do that. Grow my own, there's a lot more farmers nearby, go visit a farmer if I have to. There's a local Farmer's Market there also. So I noticed that things pick up in the spring and summer, they really get a lot better. In the wintertime it seems to go a bit downhill, 'cause there's not all the good produce around that I would like to see. But I always buy used clothes as much as I can. I hardly ever buy new. I do have a vehicle..." (Fred/Dave 127-144) When Dave is living out of the city he finds himself doing things differently, more in tune with the local environment, seasons, and the light. "...Try to do a little bit of gathering, getting the garden ready of course. That takes awhile, you don't get the stuff you need right away in the spring. And there's no electricity out there. Eventually we'll slowly get a solar power system, hopefully. Right now some nights it's candles or some nights it's a lantern. I don't like to use a lantern too much 'cause there's another fuel product. It's not that healthy for you being in the same room as that stuff. It's also very dangerous, you tip one over and it's kerosene and it just blows right up. But you know I find out that when I'm in the city here, my hours are like to midnight, two in the morning, when I'm out there it's dark and I go to sleep. I just it's a natural thing, it's dark, go to bed. You know. You get up when the sun comes up. So I've been getting up really early six or seven o'clock when I'm out there and going to bed ten o'clock, nine thirty, ten. And so you know that's another way of consuming less. (Fred/Dave 260-272) With spring Dave is beginning to concentrate on the garden and about things he's interested in learning about- doing self-education. "I've got the garden to take care of and that's my main focus right now is the garden and it's just starting right now. The land is not up to par yet so I've gotta work the soil a lot and it's gonna take a few years. So that'll be the main focus right now and of course herbology which goes sort of hand in hand with the garden." (Fred/Dave 344-348)

I asked Fred what the vision is for the Green Community is and this was his answer; "Well a community of 25 individuals and families. In the community the focal point would be a wilderness centre, a learning centre or learning institute. And that would be offering learning facilities for the people of the Green Community but also workshop and classroom programs offered to the general public. And that's a potential source of revenue, the workshops in particular, outdoor survival skills, health workshops, workshops on ecological awareness, it goes on and on. Possibly some programs could be an extension of other learning programs. And that central building is the focal point of the Green Community is also the community focal point if there was a social there is a space in there for that. If there was a council for the people, there again there's space there for that. There's a library there, there's resource facilities, computers, communications, some communications facilities, modems and whatnot. And I visualize this village being energy, totally energy self-sufficient. In terms of making electricity from solar panels and a lot of the heat for the houses would be both passive solar and, one person is interested in biogas for their fuel for their place. So we don't want to connect with the grid system, we might get to a point where we connect and then produce energy that goes into the grid system, sell. There is a source of revenue. I visualize many, maybe a majority or maybe a lot of people living there will be able to make their living there, working there. Maybe some people working part-time outside of that environment, maybe some people working full time. But I envision this place having the ability to produce the needs and the resources to have a comfortable low impact lifestyle. And what we're proposing is preparing our own building code, Green Community building code book. Which would, for example there would be, all the toilets, one regulation all toilets would have to be waterless. Any kind of waterless toilet, as long as it's waterless. You know regulations, we're hoping to produce the most ...environmentally benign set of building regulations in the world. And kind of promote the whole concept. This village of course could be uh three-quarters food self-sufficient too. Gardens and herbs, potatoes. Dave: Greenhouse. Fred: Maybe some grain. But of course I envision some significant greenhouses. Possibly year round with the possibility of selling some of the produce that's produced in the gardens and in the greenhouses again for revenue. And selling some garden products perhaps too. Of course the idea for me, I'm hoping that people don't embrace the idea of making money from being ecological." (Fred/Dave 375-412) Fred and Dave are at an interesting point in the development of their living. They are living somewhat conventionally, somewhat ecologically. They are in a particular situation but working toward a vision of a different more ecological situation. They seem on their way to creating their Green Community.

Myron and Donna

Greg and I get in our truck and drive two and a half hours to get to where Myron and Donna live. I turn off the highway on to a gravel road and continue on until I see the driveway with their names on the mailbox. The driveway consists of two narrow tracks through the trees. Ahead of me is a small pasture with a horse in it- to the sides are trees and small outbuildings and piles of "stuff". I drive around past the large garden area. Donna told me about their garden; "We have the big garden and the little garden there and got the apple trees and got all the flower beds and the greenhouse (pointing in the direction of them) and I start things in the front porch. So gardening season is a bit long cause I start some things in February but you start things really early in the house." Carmen: What do you start in February, tomatoes? Donna: "No, pansies (laughs) the flowers, they take the longest. Sometimes I start some slower growing things not too much usually you just barely get things going by the end of February." (Donna 79-87) They have a greenhouse that faces south and is next to a cluster of buildings to the north of the house. "I start stuff for the garden like all the cabbages and some lettuce in there but then during the summer it's tomatoes, tomatoes and peppers I've had squash but I don't think I'll do that anymore they take up too much room." (Donna 91-94)

As I continue through their yard I see an old truck, a storage shed, the compost pile, the flower gardens and up to the house. The huge mounds of dirt piled next to the house are grown over with grass and small saplings. These piles are the result of digging a basement about 15 years ago and never building, never filling in the hole. Both Myron and Donna laughed when they told me that story. Myron tells me that they moved this house onto their property as a temporary measure and are planning an addition to replace the porch. During the winter Donna spends time, "...reading and research and planning and things we're going to do like houses." (Donna 60) Myron talks about some of the things they would like to incorporate into the addition. "Donna has incorporated things like airlocks and so on and it'll be heated by its own wood heating unit and probably in conjunction with that we'll look at a different sanitation system and maybe or whatever but basically she's doing all the designing because she really enjoys that. She's very familiar with a lot of the notions with regard to energy efficiency and the way things should be built for maximum insulation in these climates and everything and me if someone tells me what to do it's easier for me to do it than to sit down and also do it." (Myron 69-76)

We brush the cats aside and attempt to keep them out of the house when we open the door to the porch, and go in. The house is heated with a natural gas furnace, they have a freezer, fridge and stove on electricity, and the lights are electric. We sit down at the table to have a cup of tea and to chat for the evening. We drink tea and talk about "the good life", their kids, who are away from home now, the chickens, and what's been happening lately. The house is wonderful. There are shelves everywhere. In the porch the shelves are crammed with kitchen utensils, gardening tools, things that don't work anymore but might be useful someday, and squash from the garden. The cupboards in the kitchen are full of jars of beans and fruit and red and green tomatoes. Their furniture is beautifully, refinished and well used, but they tell me it is all bought at auctions and used stores like Value Village. They then fix it and refinish it. "Like that old Hoosier cupboard was coming apart at the seams from being out in the open and we fixed it up." (Myron 234-235) The living area is entirely surrounded by shelves of books all the way to the ceiling. Donna says it's because the house doesn't have any insulation and Myron goes into his story about a guy whose house fell down because he had too many books on one side of it. Myron pulls book after book off their shelves for me to read. He periodically disappears into the next room to find a book. One of Myron's passions is books- any kind of books. All of his books are purchased second-hand and on any topic you could think of from survival to plants to geography, to medicine to plumbing. He remembers the story of how he found each one of his favourite books. The next room has a loft bed surrounded by shelves of books, the space under the bed is full of books, the room itself is lined with books and the stairs are narrow, due to...books. He's trying to write another book (he's already published two) so some of his books are in the Book Factory, (his kids named it). The Book Factory is a small building that he moved on to his farm where he writes and keeps stuff. This building is heated with a wood stove and is full of books, a large desk, cubby holes and a couch. We spend an hour there, picking out books for me to read the next day. He has a granary (called The Annex) next to the Book Factory that is also full of boxes of books. There's an outhouse behind the Book Factory that they use as well as the bathroom just off the porch in the house. There is hot and cold running water and a pail system for an inside toilet. Donna's big scheme is to put an addition on the house and put in a composting toilet. "I've got things to do this winter, I'm moving the bathroom in there and I was looking downstairs the other day and maybe I'll be able to build a clivus multrum- it's a composting toilet. Yeah I've wanted one for years." Carmen: And you're going to build it? Donna: "Better than that pail, oh yes I'll build it. Oh we can't afford to buy a new car, we certainly couldn't afford to buy a clivus multrum, they're so expensive.

Yup, we'll have to build....but my books are all out of date they're about ten years old, so maybe things have improved over the years- maybe better plans." (Donna 165-178)

Donna has just finished cleaning out her garden and as they're starting to get a lot of frost at night she has a lot of house plants and tomatoes in the greenhouse. Myron, Greg and I check the greenhouse. Myron has a metal pipe running the length of it. He lights a propane torch that is connected to a large propane tank and then puts it in the end of the metal pipe. This system ends up distributing the heat the length of the greenhouse so that Donna's house plants and remaining tomatoes don't freeze at night. Many of Myron's "inventions" are by trial and error. He tells us that he used to use a wood stove but it was too hot at one end of the greenhouse and too cold at the other. Myron taps the side of the tank and figures that there is enough propane to last one more night. It is 2:00am by the time we crawl up into the loft bed to sleep.

We wake up in the morning and go down to see the kitchen full of half frozen house plants. Donna is disappointed and Myron is sheepish. We eat some porridge and Myron and Greg head off to the bush to teach a course. Donna decides that she'll rescue some of the house plants and then paint the porch. I go off to the Book Factory to read. Donna calls me for lunch- a stew of squash and beans and tomatoes and noodles. She says she doesn't like cooking, but it tastes great. She's doing well on painting the porch and after the first coat is going to make green tomato mincemeat with the frozen tomatoes in order to salvage some of them. She doesn't seem to want any help. She's used to being alone all day, doing what she wants. She talks about the seasons and how her work changes. "Summer is busy (emphasis) 'cause you're gardening all the time and fall too because you're putting everything away, that you've done all summer, so yeah it's really busy in the summer once you can get out. In the winter it's more ah you know you're in the house doing in the house kind of things like the weaving, or whatever else I have the urge to do." (Donna 48-52)

Walking around their 17 acres of land with Myron, he shows me his shop where he has some tools and a lot of spare parts for things. He goes to the dump and brings home things that someone else threw away that might be useful someday. These rescued treasures sit in piles among the trees. Donna told me that he actually took some stuff to the dump the other day because he'd had it for 15 years and hadn't used it. "He's had piles of stuff for 20 years. If you keep something for at least 15 years you usually end up using it. If he keeps it for 20 he usually hauls it back. We cleaned out a shed the other day and made a great huge empty space and he actually hauled some of it to the dump but he brought some stuff

back too. He did. We'd have lots of room if we weren't pack rats, both of us, but see in order to live ecologically you have to save everything. (laughs) It might come in handy..." (Donna 266-273)

Myron talks about all of the things he does at home when he isn't busy teaching a course. "...growing garden, repairing my own vehicles, putting up my own fences and refinishing furniture, building my own buildings putting in everything myself, (laughs) Look at all the garbage that's here that's 22 years. Those old logs buildings back there were the only thing here when we came here." (Myron 230-234) "...but anyway, when you want to live this lifestyle, you do a lot more for yourself you don't sit around at home waiting for a job waiting for a telephone call it should be that when they telephone you it should take 15 min to get you because you're doing something like refinishing furniture or writing a book or building your house or you gotta have that going as a filler." (Myron 211-215)

Myron is fairly self-sufficient as he repairs everything he owns himself. He always has Datsun vehicles and makes one car out of several. Donna's washing machine is a combination of three different ones that came from the dump. They do say that it takes a lot of time to recycle and reuse things but they feel it's worth it. "...that's the way we used to make the dollars stretch more than anything else." (Myron 258) "Always buy second hand never buy new." (Myron 245)

Donna talks about how they got to where they are. "...we talked of going back to the land but I don't think in terms of saving the planet or anything like that. I don't remember it was a long time ago. The peace movement was big back then that's what we worried about back then. It wasn't ecology it was ban the bomb and all that which is good too but you know it wasn't ---back to the land was always good. I just like to be in the country. And Myron grew up in the country. I don't know how we ended up here it just kinda happened (laughs) even when we lived in ____ we lived on the outskirts on the very edge. But we really like it." (Donna 290-297) Myron tells me that, "I got into this sort of lifestyle by accident I didn't know that you could get away with it." (Myron 104-105) Myron used to work as a social worker but got interested in teaching outdoor living courses. "...so I was burning the candle on both ends and it wasn't that I needed the extra money, it was that I was really into something that I discovered something that I really really enjoyed and I found that social work although I don't have that much against it I found that its one of those things that as a social worker you're a little fish in a huge ocean and in the work I'm doing now I'm a whale in a pond and there's so few of us around that have an interesting time of it compared to going to work everyday" (Myron 141-146) He talked about types of

lifestyles like working for someone else or only being able to do only one very specialized profession and then referred to his own way of doing things, being self-employed, that he is much more satisfied with. "...that third lifestyle. It's sort of like existing like a coyote, you're lean and mean but you manage. You're not unhappy because of the fact that you aren't working for someone else which has its stresses and frustrations and you have a much greater choice." (Myron 97-100) Myron has busy times of running courses which he is paid for in cash and then he has periods of time where he does 'living work'. "...you don't seem to pay any attention because you seem to have other things that are more important to attend to than to pinch every penny or save every dime. That way it can be occasionally it seems like boom or bust sometimes it seems like there's a lot of work and sometimes there isn't but in my own situation I found that I could weather those periods of lack of work by always having something to do around here. As crude as it is, whether it's put in a water system or whatever, I always find that when things are going really well I always be sure to buy enough nails and boards when things are going really well and then I can't blow that money when it's there and when there is not work I build something or repair something or get into other stuff and I would like the writing to be more into that instead of hammers and nails, theoretically my idea would be that in the slack periods I would write and in the periods where there was lots of work I would be able to work and sustain myself and put a little bit away to hold me over in the writing." (Myron 162-175)

Both Myron and Donna feel that their security lies not in their ability to earn money but in their ability to sustain themselves by growing their own food. "Anybody that's worried about security in the future the thing is to find the opportunity where you can grow a big garden so you're never hungry. That's the first point. And then put money into the fertility of the soil instead of putting it into the bank." (Myron 260-263)

Stop

Stop lives in an older, well established neighbourhood in Prairie City. I had quite a time arranging a time to go and visit her because of her busy, active schedule. Stop's house is older, filled with the possessions of a lifetime. We sit in her kitchen and drink coffee as we talk about her life and what she does now. Stop is an active, involved woman in her '60's with three grown children. "I like to skate and I did ski for quite a few years and I do my gardening and shovel snow in the wintertime." (Stop 506-507) In her home and daily activities she does some things to limit her impact on the environment such as "...Well I try to provide food for my family that is as healthy as possible. I compost, I grow my own

vegetables in the summertime. I try to do as many errands as I have to do in one day so that I don't drive my car excessively. I use a cloth shopping bag when I go shopping. And I try to not buy things that are overpackaged or that don't have good nutritional value." (Stop 16-20)

There are other things in her home that she does in her home to benefit people and the environment; "I try to buy laundry detergents for instance that are as pure as soap as possible, no phosphates. Of course that's legislated by the federal government now, so, it doesn't matter what you buy- there's no phosphates in detergent. But dishwasher detergents are something that they didn't legislate an end to the use of phosphates for and so you buy a dishwasher detergent and it's still got lots of phosphates in it. Or something called NTA and that's probably worse for the environment than phosphates are." (Stop 71-77)

I asked Stop how she got started in activism; "Well I think that the way I got started in activism was in the '60s. My children were all born in the 1960's my oldest daughter was born in '65 and I got involved with a group called The Voice of Women and the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. All of which grew up in the early '60's and lasted, well the Voice of Women is still active today. But in those days the emphasis was on the problems caused by the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout the world and I really believe that that's how the consciousness of people was raised about the environment because in those days when they were testing nuclear weapons in the United States. And they're just now finding out what the long term effects of that testing were and how dangerous they really were and now information is coming to light about how they actually fed people nuclear, matter..... radioactive uh stuff and auch it's absolutely disgusting. Then in the '70's, in the early '70's late '60's when the test ban treaty had already been signed and there was no more above ground testing at least in the United States. The emphasis turned from the concern about nuclear to the concern about other things in the environment that was causing problems like our dependence on chemicals is a really big issue. All of the waste from industries especially in Alberta from oilfield operation has become a real issue. And I think that that was the beginning." (Stop 96-116)

The area where Stop tries to increase her impact is that of education through activism. Over the years she has been a member of various activism groups and is very well versed in a variety of environmental and political issues. We discussed many issues such as; the use of chemicals to grow food, food from California, globalization, local jobs, phosphates,

dioxins, diapers, cancer, politicians, abuse in the family, population, education, sewage sludge, EdTel, T.V. and a few other environmental and social justice issues. "...in fact now in my declining years I belong to a group called the Raging Grannies. And we go out and sing about these things." Carmen: Sounds like a lot of fun. "Stop: Yeah it is. Our message is very political, so yeah.." (Stop 88-91) For Stop it is very important that the message of the Raging Grannies be strongly political. "Well we sing at rallies and marches and a lot of groups like the Kwannis Club and the Strathcona Seniors and the Lions Club and those kinds of places ask us to come and sing to them. And we have 45 or 46 different songs that talk about cut backs, about the environment, about social justice issues, wife battering and child abuse for instance. And those kinds of things..." (Stop 171-175) She told me about the songs they sing and gave me my own private performance. "...we use well know songs or songs that we know anyway, they might not be well known to everyone. But we make up our own words. And then people seem to be more familiar with the songs so they (turning pages) And so it's sort of fun to see people's reaction when we say some of these things. Like this question about seniors- our song goes;

Our seniors we'll say none of them needs a car
 And trust us and trust us and trust us
 And now they'll stop buying champagne and caviar
 The same goes for nurses and school teachers too
 There are too many of them, we need just a few
 and private employers are better for you
 So trust us and trust us and trust us
 Then like Manning's Reformers using much the same plea
 Trust us and trust us and trust us
 They'll privatize everything just wait and see
 So fellow Albertans young and old too let's shout out together
 We're fed up with you and tell those damn Tories and Reformers too
 We don't trust you, don't trust you, don't trust you. " (Stop 214-232)

Stop is an amazing woman that I do not consider to be old and would definitely not want to be up against her in a political battle. "...we just tell it like we see it. Our words are very outspoken and they may be shocking to some but we believe that they, that people have to hear that message." (Stop 175-178)

Cougar and Emma

I left my house in the river valley and walked across a foot bridge and navigated my way down a walking trail and through a small community. I searched through the clusters of townhomes to find the number I was looking for. I knew I was at the right unit when I saw the boxes of jars, paper and plastic ready to go off to the recycle and when I saw the two bikes parked out front. Cougar and Emma have a two bedroom unit in a co-op. They cooperate with other members of the co-op to pay the mortgage, fix things, do maintenance and share tools and resources. "Cougar: I moved to Alberta I guess about 14 years ago from Montreal and before I moved here, probably a year or two prior to that I became interested in housing co-ops. I'd heard about the concept, a friend I knew actually lived in one. And it seemed to me like a really attractive way to live, in that you have the security of a place to live which is really one of the bonuses of home ownership is that you have a place to live, no one, no landlord is going to come and kick you out. I never really liked landlords too much, they can be pretty arbitrary and have their own agenda so. A co-op gives you the security of a place to live but you don't have to have that financial risk or financial stress of you know, what happens if I don't get a job, can't pay the mortgage and the bank comes and takes away my house. You sort of have the best of both worlds. I'd heard of this in Montreal and when I moved out to Prairie City, I looked around for where the housing co-ops were and heard of _____ and got in into one of the cooperative houses the collective houses with four or five adult individuals living together. And over the years I moved into my own unit...jump in. Emma: Well and my experience is, I was at university, I was kind of an academic, I was going in that direction and I didn't have any practical experience or any real life experience really, I'd travelled but with regards to co-ops I wasn't tuned into them in any way and I met Cougar and began working with him and advocating with him on issues and that began my introduction to cooperative housing and alternative lifestyles. Cougar: And I guess in terms of, just to add maybe, in terms of maybe the focus of this discussion on ecological lifestyles. For me it was really important number one to live close to where I work and I was working downtown and it makes a lot of sense, from an ecological perspective to actually live close to where you work. And so it made sense to be here and also, I mean as the crow flies it's maybe a mile and a half from downtown, and also being right next to the river and the river valley and the whole sort of greenway through Prairie City and the river valley parks and the river itself is really an attraction as well." (Cougar/Emma 24-52)

Their house gives the impression of two busy, active people who are always on the go. The walls are covered with posters of events or protests, newspaper clippings and several walls of books and tapes. In the living room their worm composter (the standard blue Rubbermaid rectangular container with holes drilled in it, if Rubbermaid only knew!) sits next to the stereo and their "gizmo" for drying plastic bags sits next to the answering machine. They sit on the couch eating brunch and Emma tells me about how she got to where she is now in her life. "...I became more conscious culturally as I entered university and as I began travelling in my late teens early twenties and was aware that I needed to become more community centred, I needed to I needed to practice what I was learning in school and what I was understanding to be you know, global problems and stuff. But I was frustrated, consciously frustrated because I wasn't practicing what I was learning. And I knew that I wanted to get involved in community organization and I sort of tried a few different ones, the ____ Centre, I wanted to get involved maybe in global education, I wasn't really sure where my education was going but I knew that I needed to be involved. Then I met Cougar who was sort of a real community activist really out there, really involved out on the edge and we became partners and I really quickly got involved in the work that he was working on which was with the Bicycle Group hence I'm still a bicycle activist today. So that was seven years ago and it happened at exactly the same time that I became involved with Cougar so not only did I move out of the house at the same time as well, so moved away from you know my parents, from under their wing, to moving into a life with Cougar." (Emma2:128-144) She also told me about what she does now. In some ways Emma has two lives, her life as an activist/organizer and her life as a dancer/dance instructor. "I'm working on political campaigns that are opposing or supporting things that Prairie City Council is doing or that the administration is doing so usually it's organizing sub-committees to be doing research and working on issues. Not so much that I'm doing it, I'm getting other people to do the work. Most often I'm sort of managing volunteers. Or staff people who are working for slave wages in the summer. Or even now, the two staff that I have right now are working at slave wages from welfare grants. Typically I spend time on the computer everyday, I'm starting to get involved with Internet and different e-mail systems and I'm networking also with other groups around Canada and the United States, and when I was in Montreal last week, I networked with other activists, bicycle and anti-car activists specifically that were in those cities. Met with them, got more literature from them, just developed a relationship with them more so I'll be connecting with them on e-mail regularly as well as gathering other information." (Emma2:36-49) "...so my other life, my sort of real job is dancing, and I think that that other life is what really sustains me physically and emotionally in my activism work." (Emma2:80-81) "So

dancing also financed my travel, financed my schooling and to this day finances my activism so sort of my part-time job which pays me a really good, you know, hourly wage and it keeps me fit and it keeps me involved with kids. Because I don't have kids myself and I don't really have time for my friends' kids. I don't have the same sort of social sphere, I have lots of acquaintances but I don't make a lot of time for friends 'cause I'm really focused on work so dancing keeps me involved with kids and at that level. It's also given me good teaching skills and confidence skills, so it's been really key in my activism work. And it's kept me in shape and healthy." (Emma2:96-104)

Cougar is a member of Prairie City Council. He told me about his daily sort of routines and work. "Uh, wake up in the morning. Usually the alarm clock will wake us up which is a timer connected to a tape recorder so some music would come on. Wake up 7:30 in the morning 8:00 something like that. Get out of bed have a shower. Emma'll usually cook breakfast or I'll cook breakfast. Do some dishes, read the paper, hang out a bit, check the thermometer, go to the bathroom, brush my teeth, get on my bike, get dressed, warm clothes, get on my bike. And pedal up the hill to City Hall and spend most of the day there usually in meetings or reading stuff, lot of reading, have something to eat for lunch, write a few letters, go to a few more meetings, maybe leave the building to go off to some meeting somewhere and come home usually 7:00-8:00 pm. Hang out a bit and read a bit and go to sleep. Something like that." I asked, "What kinds of things do you do for, I guess it's called leisure?" "I guess I'm not so much a believer in leisure as something from my life that's compartmentalized. I try to in a way integrate all parts of my life together. So! The work that I do isn't just work at the office. The work is part of my life." (Cougar/Emma 880-894) "I guess the ideal for me would be to always be working and always be playing. That the work itself becomes play and becomes leisure and becomes you know it's not work in quotation marks. It's not something that I have to do to make money or whatever. The work that I do is an important part of my life." (Cougar/Emma 897-901) He also shared some insights about how he keeps going as an activist. "I feel really strongly about what I'm doing, what I'm trying to do on council and I can't just sort of say oh well you win some you lose some. So it's really important for my sort of ability to get up day after day and you know go to battle for these issues although I'm not a big fan of wars and going to battle isn't the best analogy, but I haven't come up with a better one but going to battle for these things, and when you lose some it's really hard to come back the next day and keep trying. So it's important for me to get away and to go visit with my family back east in Montreal and my friends or head out to the mountains or go travelling in Mexico. You know just to get away from it- to get some perspective. 'Cause I

find you know I've been doing environmental advocacy work for twenty years and it's really important I find to be in it for the long haul. There's a tendency, I think there's a tendency for people to fight so hard and to push so hard and to really sort of get discouraged and at some point just back away from it and I wanna be able to continue doing this. And I realize that in order for me to be able to do that I've gotta keep my mental level high enough and that means keeping perspective on things." (Cougar/Emma 933-949)

The kitchen walls are filled with an array of glass jars of beans, grains, nuts and various other food items. When I arrive Emma is cooking a vegetarian breakfast. She tells me about the food they eat, buy and where they get it. "Most of our food is bought bulk and organic. We belong to a food buying club so every two months we get together with a group of about ten other people, ten other households." (Cougar/Emma 204-207) "...we're vegetarians, we eat a lot of you know in terms of the levels of ecological eating, you can start with grains and then beans and then local vegetables, you know trying to eat organic and trying to eat locally as much as possible, so we eat a lot of grains daily, we eat grains, and often eat beans, local vegetables. Like we never shop at Safeway or those kinds of stores," (Cougar/Emma 216-220) "...for example right when I leave here I'll be going to the Farmer's Market and I'll be getting locally grown organic vegetables. We still have potatoes from our own garden, but obviously some of the items you can't buy anymore and so we just don't buy them, certain vegetables or fruits we just don't buy them and we don't eat them through the year. There still are lots of vegetables and local green houses that are growing things like onions because there are no more onions left. There are still carrots and beets and potatoes and up to about one month ago there was spinach, so we were still having fresh spinach so we adapt our nutritional eating habits according to the season. Cougar: We grow our own indoor vegetables in the middle of winter. Emma: Yes so we do sprouts in our house, but also we buy sprouts at the Farmer's Market from Chinese people and tofu and all of that stuff is local. (Cougar/Emma 223-234) Cougar and Emma make a big effort to reduce their garbage, which is part of the reason why they buy bulk. "For example we have one little bag of garb, one little you know bathroom garbage can worth of garbage. We've been saying before that it's once a month but I think it's maybe once every two months but that's the maximum amount of garbage that we throw out. Everything gets recycled or because we're buying bulk we're not buying the packaging or we save all our bags, so whenever we do any shopping, we always bring, we always have bags in our bike panniers or in our pockets so we're quite successful I think in really cutting down the amount of garbage that gets produced out of this house." (Cougar/Emma 336-344) They have lots of little "tricks" in order to reduce their garbage

including their "bag drying gizmo", which Cougar invented. "Well it's a one of our innovations, it's a bag drying rack. So often people will think of reusing bags but they still tend to get a little grungy when you have a peanut butter sandwich in there. So what do you do with that bag? We just put our reused, our bags for reuse, next to the sink and then when we wash the dishes we rinse them out and hang them up to dry there, then they come out here and you know they might be hanging here for a week or two and over that period of time the air gets into them and they dry out so they don't get smelly inside and then they're easy to reuse." (Cougar/Emma 345-354) They also talked about their recycling system. "We have little recycling stations in a lot of the rooms of the house so it's not just one station where it's always a pain so we won't just be as likely to chuck it in the garbage. So like paper bins in a whole bunch of the different, three different rooms. And plastic bins in a couple of different rooms. So that's a tip that we just learned over the years that makes it easier for us to be recycling is to have little boxes in different rooms to recycle different items and it just makes it more convenient." (Cougar/Emma 444-450)

Cougar and Emma tell me that they are always thinking of the next thing that they can do in order to live more ecologically. They told me about a wide variety of things that they do, "gizmos" they have, and ideas they are thinking about. "One of the things we're doing in our own household is most of the lights have been converted to energy efficient lights, and we have been selling energy efficient lights at our office, to people, at sort of a reduced cost, and talk to people and encourage people to do it." (Emma2:315-318) "We don't have a clothes dryer we hang up all our clothes to dry. All the food scraps go back, go back into the compost bin in the backyard or our worm composting bin." (Cougar/Emma 425-427) "...toilet dam (reduces water flushed) And our shower head is low flow." (Cougar/Emma 403) "...our um washing detergent for the washing machine is phosphate free, ecologically breaks down." (Cougar/Emma 475-476) "Baking soda, we use that for you know bathroom appliances and things like that. It's a little bit more elbow grease for sure." (Cougar/Emma 525-526)

"We shop second hand so you know Cougar buys all of his clothes at Salvation Army. We hardly buy clothes but when we do. It's where you shop for sure." (Cougar/Emma 568-569) "Emma: ...as you can tell we're not really fashion buffs (laughs) but, and that's you know I've sort of changed my, I think I used to be more of a fashion buff than when I became sort of more ecologically sensitive. But we wear a lot of wool, so wool socks, wool underwear, wool sweaters all the time, especially because we're outdoors everyday. So we always have a couple of layers on. Which makes it somewhat uncomfortable because when you go into a building then you have to strip off a layer or two, so it's

always a bit of a pain for me but. Cougar: Sort of like Superman when you walk into a building peeling clothes off and people think who is this guy? What's he doing? Emma: Because everyone else just drove from their garage into the parkade right? (laughs) and they don't have hats on or anything. So we you know we dress for the seasons for sure. And have rain gear and lots of scarves." (Cougar/Emma 537-548)

In the summer Cougar and Emma grow a lot of their own food. "...we have two small gardens, one is just right behind the house right between here and the compost bin along the fence and then we have a community plot. The co-op has a community plot just at the end of this housing unit here and there's probably about a dozen residents here in the co-op that each have plots so it's a real community space. People share food and they're out there gardening together and they share tools. It's a really nice summer activity. So we have a big plot out there where we grow potatoes and onions and stuff. We use rechargeable batteries, we recharge all of our batteries. Computer, e-mail so we're trying to stop some of the paper flow. And I use reusable menstrual pads." (Cougar/Emma 434-442)

"We also have some little gadgets in the house, little solar gadgets. Just so that as people enter the house, you know the light comes on and sound generates the light bulb and the light bulb turns this little motor and the motor hits the ding bell so. So talking to people about it. And the heat in our household is always really low so and people who come over have to wear hats or sweaters (laughs). And you know we compost all our own food so, reduction of garbage and no beyond that we haven't been able to incorporate energy efficiency in our own lifestyle, except for of course not driving cars." (Emma 2:321-330) Cougar and Emma place a great deal of emphasis both in their lives and in their activism on being car free. They define car free as; "Emma: Not dependent on a car for your everyday means of transport. Not owned a car." (Cougar/Emma 613)

They fill their transportation requirements in three ways: bicycle, public transport and taxis. "Emma: We commute by bicycle. Most of our transport is by bicycle so we can you know if we had to go to the other side of the city we'd normally still take our bicycles. Sometimes we hop on the LRT and hitch a ride on the LRT for a certain length. We have back racks on the back of our bikes and we also have a trailer, for example when we go pick up our food today or tomorrow from the food buying club we'll probably take the trailer with us and it'll probably take a couple of loads back and forth. Cougar: We can probably take two or three or four boxes of food in there. Emma: Yeah. But we use the trailer quite seldom, but we use our back racks all the time so it's really common for me to

have a big box strapped onto my back rack so anything from books to groceries. When I go up to the Farmer's Market today I'll take a box up there with me and my bags and it'll all end up on the bicycle." (Cougar/Emma 678-689) "Emma: ...coming home on a cab. So occasionally or sometime we'll even hitchhike depending on where and when. Cougar: The cab's an important one. You know it's not that we're 100% anti-car we're just 99.5%. If you don't have a car you still have to manage and at that point when it's 1:30 in the morning and you've missed the last bus if you can allow yourself which we certainly can you know the comfort of calling a taxi and going home by cab and that's fine and it ends up you know that we're still saving a lot of money by not having the car so we can afford the luxury I guess of taking a cab once in awhile. And an interesting sort of innovation that we've come up with that I guess most people don't know about is cabs have really big trunks and it's really easy to put a bicycle in the trunk of a cab and they don't mind. So you might be riding out somewhere and you get a flat tire. Well generally you'd think oh geez how am I going to get home this is a huge hassle I'm going to have to phone a friend to come pick me up. No! You just call a cab and you throw the bike into the back of the taxi." (Cougar/Emma 696-710)

Living in the city has advantages for Cougar and Emma. In most rural communities cycling everywhere would be very difficult, but not impossible. As well in rural areas buses and taxis are a rare if nonexistent occurrence. Thus their priorities suit where they live. Emma talks about another advantage of city life; "So music is a big part of my life, or concerts, especially now that Cougar is employed, I don't have to think twice about going to the ballet or to a concert so I'm living a pretty bourgeois concert kind of lifestyle. That's really a joy for me, and I'm really fortunate to be able to go to concerts or go to New York and take in all the shows that I can possibly fit into my schedule." (Emma2:118-122)

Cougar talks about mind set and is good at presenting alternative ideas or ways of looking at issues or 'problems.' For example, "There's so much talk about job creation and how we need to be creating jobs. We could have hundreds of people in Edmonton working, picking dandelion greens, making dandelion wine, drying dandelion root for coffee. The potential is enormous for working with the ecosystem rather than working against it and I think that really that's a mind set. You know the mind set of looking out your back window and seeing dandelions and being pissed off and calling in Green Drop- that's a mind set. You know the other mind set is to say hey, you know it's like the old saying when you 're dealt lemons make lemonade. I mean, we've got a tremendous climate for growing dandelions (laughs) They grow well, it's perfect. You know let's take advantage

of that and you know you go to a health food store and you wanna buy dried dandelion someone was telling me, you'll pay 5 bucks a pound for it. You know apparently in Europe, I mean in France you can't find dandelions not because they're poisoned but because people are digging them up all the time." (Cougar/Emma 1125-1137)

Emma speaks of some of their frustrations in their own community but isn't giving up hope for change. "...and you see such an obvious opportunity and people just aren't open... Well we learnt a lot I mean that the community isn't necessarily as progressive as we thought it was. Or maybe it's just that people aren't educated or aren't open minded to the whole ecological crisis that we're facing or the ecological opportunities that are available. I think that's a new, that's the next level and people aren't ready, I think they're ready for it but they're not they haven't clued into it yet. And that was a big eye-opener for us in (our community) given that it is the most progressive community in Edmonton, ecologically they weren't anywhere near where the ecological community is on the planet or in Canada right now. There's a big gap there." (Emma2:349-359)

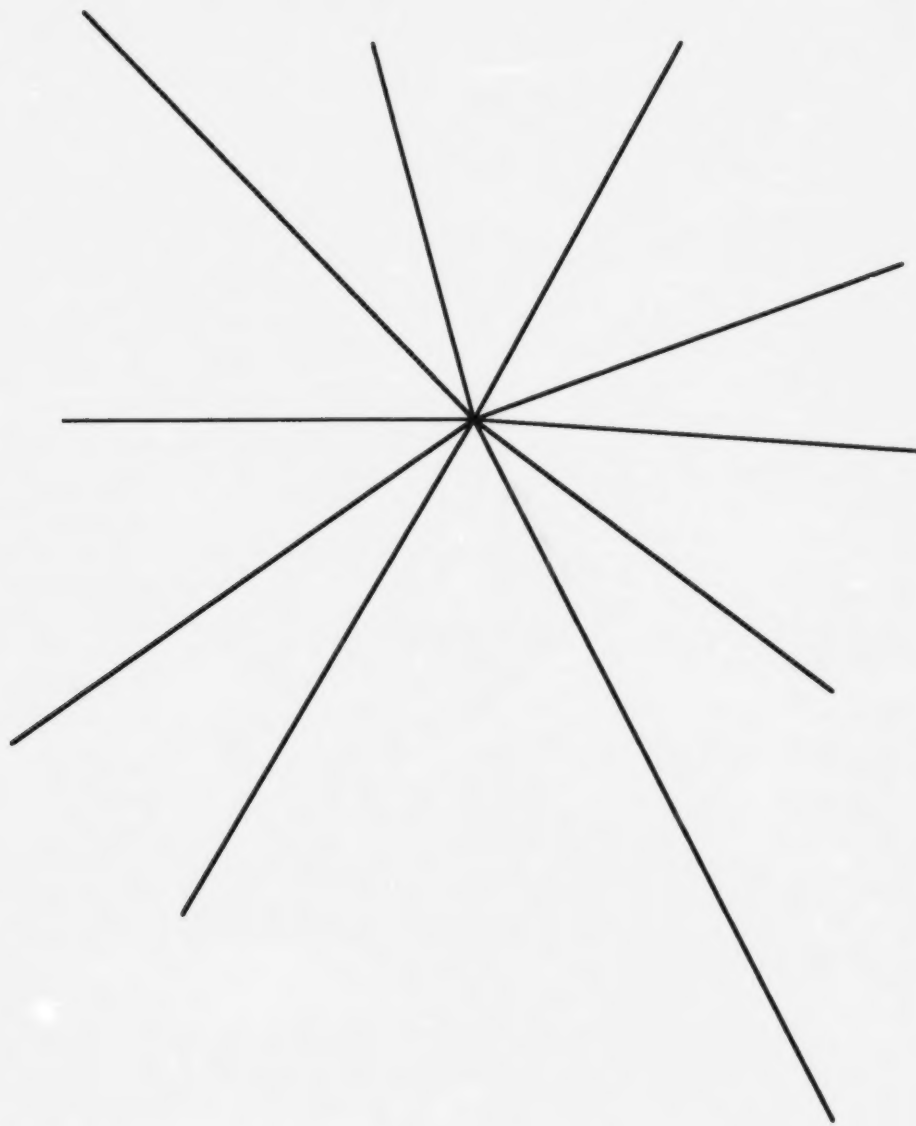
CHAPTER III

BUILDING THE WEB

One can find spiders everywhere, they seem to come from all sorts of places and create all different sorts of webs.

One can find spiders that catch their prey with a sticky globule on the end of a silk line. There are spider 'architects' that construct impressive webs and then take them down again in the morning. One can find caring, 'responsible' spiders that build nursery webs for their families while others carry the whole brood of spiderlings on their back. There are spider 'engineers' that tunnel into the ground and make secret passages for escape in case of intruders. There is even a unique spider 'frogman' that takes down an air supply to breathe under water. Many species preserve and store food for a 'rainy day' when no flies are about, but some crafty little types have turned to a life of crime and do nothing more than steal food from the webs of their bigger brethren. Still, there is actually one that knocks at the 'door' of another spider's home and waits for an answer before entering! (Hillyard, 1994 p.75)

The coresearchers, like spiders, began living ecologically in a variety of ways and go about living in different ways. This chapter is about how the process of building a web, or living ecologically, may happen.



To start construction, the spider moves from her hiding place to take up a prominent position. Using the breeze, a silk line of the very finest filaments is wafted out...The spider waits, as if fishing, until this first line, the 'spanning thread', touches and adheres to an object across the gap. Feeling the thread fixed, she tightens it and runs across, back and forth, creating a stout cable of many strands; the 'bridge thread'. (Hillyard, 1994 p.105)

Perspectives

From the previous descriptions of the co-researchers one could see them in a variety of ways. One way to view the lives of the co-researchers is from the perspective of diversity illustrated on the following matrix. There are no value judgements attached to this arrangement- no one position is necessarily better than any other- just different. There is an infinite variety of combinations of these characteristics.

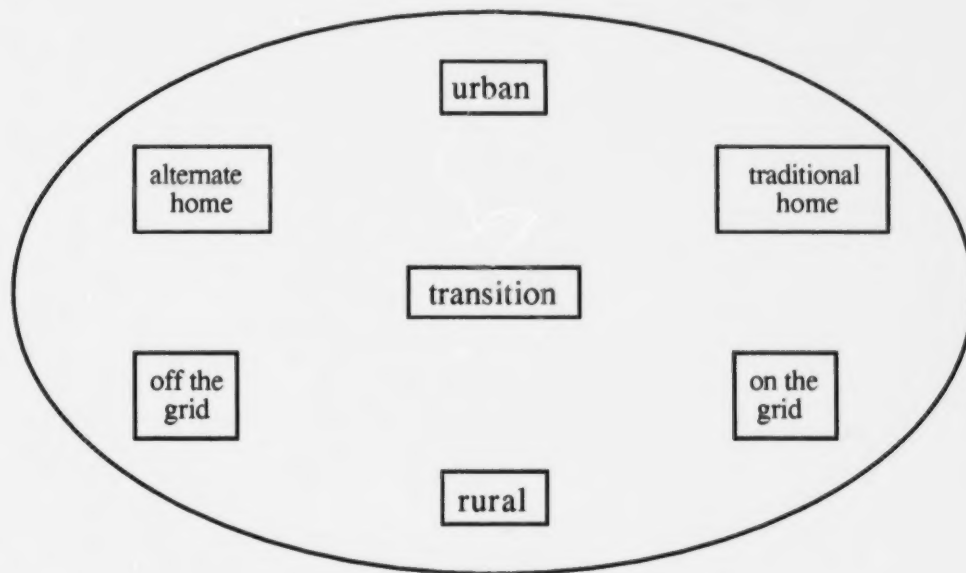


Figure 1. Perspectives

Another way to view the lives of the co-researchers is where they started from- how they got interested or began to live ecologically.

Roger/Paula - not wanting a career- wanting to live in the country and get by
- owning their own land and building a small house

Myron/Donna -working as a social worker changing to being self-employed
- choosing to not earn a lot- living ecologically by accident- to get by

Cougar/Emma- interest in housing co-ops, activists

- thoughts being put into practice

Stop

- interest in environmental issues that affected her family

- activism throughout life

Fred

- interest in ecological living- ended up in business- using money

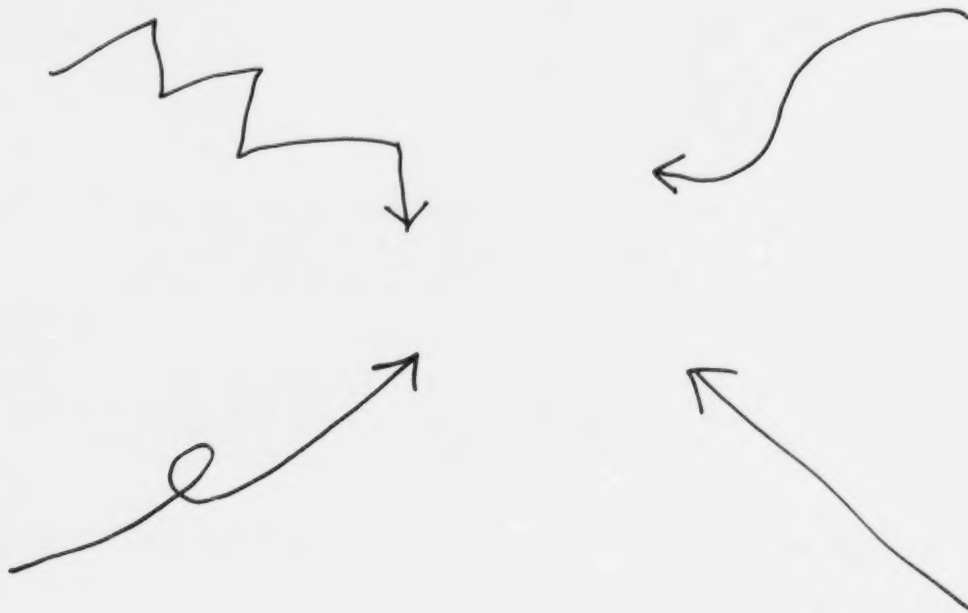
- from business as seed money to set up a alternate way of living

Dave

- started in a logging family

- exploration of different perspectives, punk rock movement, herbology, moving toward living alternatively

I have chosen to depict this concept by drawing differently configured lines. These lines start from differing points, converge on a general area and end at a variety of positions within that area. This idea will be elaborated upon throughout the thesis.



symbols of differing perspectives

Figure 2: Perspective Lines

Evolving Process

In my original thinking and writing I used the word lifestyle to describe what I was looking at. The most valuable thing that I learned from listening to the coresearchers tell me about their lives is that a lifestyle is a dynamic entity. But the word lifestyle has connotations of prestige and of being a static entity. The lives of my co-researchers were anything but static and did not carry connotations of prestige in the conventional use of the term. Attempting to live an ecological lifestyle is an evolving, changing process that is dependent on the specific situation and the specific individuals.

evolve: 1. develop gradually by a natural process. 2. to work out or devise (a theory, plan etc) 3. unfold, open out (Oxford 1990 p.405)

There is no one way of living ecologically. The ways of living evolve and change to suit the situation, the land, and the skills, desires and hopes of the people that live it. One never really "gets there", because there is no 'there'. 'There' (where ever that is) is always moving and changing and adapting. To reflect this dynamic process I think that ecological living is a more accurate way to describe the lives of the coresearchers.

Each of the coresearchers did not "just arrive" to where they are now. Each of them planned, adapted, changed, revised the way they live, for various reasons. When I was analyzing the coresearchers' transcripts I began to see a pattern of scattered references to how they "used to do things" or "we don't do that anymore." This concept is better illustrated through their own stories.

Roger and Paula

"It's been starting with nothing, just slogging it out. Picking stumps with a pick rather than burying them with a cat. So what we've done, in a short, in twenty years. We didn't have any specific plans to live here for the time period that we have it was just a place to come to. To have a place as our own, and it was just one thing at a time. Bought an unoccupied quarter. I guess a quarter since there wasn't anything else that was really available. We had no intention of farming it but it was remote and private. So we then proceeded to put a house on it, a small house, just a little place. "(Roger 361-368) "So anyway the house was just sort of put together as things went along, no great plans, no great foresight. But then we just sort of grew into the place and took on a new direction."

(Roger 402-404) "So we were both on fire towers for three summers, for three seasons so then we'd be spending our winters here. It was very nice. We had a different lifestyle because it was- being on the towers we would earn enough income to, if we were careful, to live on year round. And so the winters we were engaged in recreational pursuits, things like snowshoeing, I don't think then that we'd quite gotten into cross country skiing but it was very relaxing here, until we got into farming. And then we were in a whole different... we were into a work regimen. So after those three seasons on fire tower which is great because you can get involved in self growth activities like reading or whatever, some people play musical instruments and so forth. Well after that I then got a job landscaping and did that for summers. Like I say Paula got a cow because she wanted something to do. (laughs) So that was the beginning of it. And I think we're at a different juncture now, in a way. Paula is a lot more interested in environmental activism or activities." (Roger 452-466) "...at about that time Paula was working for a farmer who offered to give her a cow in lieu of payment or some such arrangement and she announced one day that she'd arranged to have a cow come here. So she'd bought a cow. And we had no fences, we had no water, and that cow and its calf were tethered in the yard here and in fact the cow was let to range and the calf was put in a little enclosure and the mother didn't go anywhere 'cause she wanted to stay near her calf. So that was the start of us getting into farming." (Roger 430-437) "And the other thing that I used to do that I haven't but I guess I might return to that, is I used to make a lot of wine from the rhubarb and raspberries and make beer. We just had the last of it, some chokecherry wine from '79 and some apple wine from '82. So they're good, yeah. I found these old bottles around. And the liquor store went private and I decided I wasn't going to go there, we consumed those wines. They were quite nice. We used to keep pigs, so the pigs would get the dregs from the beer and the wine crop. So I guess that's changed, but I might go back to that. The other big difference is I used to milk cows and make butter and cheese and I stopped doing that, that was pretty time consuming. I used to sell milk to neighbours which probably was illegal then, I know it's illegal now. And we'd feed the pigs the skim milk. That's a job. I would milk the cow at seven in the morning and seven at night and I'd get very anxious if I was about fifteen minutes late (laughs) I don't know if I'm prepared to do that again, it really, really ties you down." (Paula 114-126) "I'm not really helping on the farm as much as I used to. So that's pretty well what I do. I find that I probably buy a lot more than I used to in food items and clothing items. I used to make everything, so that's quite a change." (Paula 88-91) Roger alludes to the changes that come with getting older. "It seems that when you're farming you have to steal time. I used to be and I'm getting away from this, but I used to be a workaholic and I was continually running from one

machine to the next. Running from one job to another. I don't know why. Out of compulsion I guess. That plus trying to make something of myself, make something of the place. And when you're really young and there are no physical barriers, you can do that but it finally catches up to a person when you begin to feel your aches and pains and you learn that you are slowing down." (Roger 275-282)

Myron and Donna

"Yeah at this point you could probably say that we lived ecologically in the case of me and my wife by default. Just like those kids that survived for that 24 days on that island by Frog Lake. They did everything pretty well as best it could be done by default, not by knowledge." (Myron 345-348) Carmen: Last time I was here you were saying that it wasn't so much a lifestyle as you were poor, starting out. "Donna: Well we, nothing is new, auction sales or now days it's Value Village, but nothing is new. We recycle the furniture, Myron recycles clothes and I'm starting to. But we don't waste anything, but that's a lifestyle that's not living ecologically that's just what we've done to make do. So we've done that for years anyway." (Donna 115-121) "....In our lifestyle because we choose not to earn the big money to buy anything new then we try to recycle what other people throw away." (Myron 354-356) "... by necessity because of the lack of money we try to be practical of course that practicality has been considerably eased because a phenomenon like Value Village occurs because people like us have no qualms about buying something second hand and incorporating it into our lifestyle where other people it's the other way around they're the ones feeding Value Village with stuff. We're not proud in that sense when we see a good piece of furniture in Value Village we like to buy and refinish it and make it and reinforce it and make it into something that will last us the rest of our lives whether our kids want it or not that'll be another story and so on." (Myron 366-374)

Donna talks about the changes that occurred in the way they live due to their family. "I mean its varied over the years when you had kids you did those kinds of things now I don't have kids so it's different again." (Donna 31-33) "...we've tried lots of things over the years. When the kids were little we had the cow and we did the milk thing and the first time we had enough cream to make butter we didn't know how but at an auction sale we had got this big churn and we had tons of company that day, I forget how come. But anyway we decided to make butter. We filled this churn up with the cream that I'd saved we had lots from a Jersey cow and we started to turn the handle and make the butter and the

cream frothed up and overflowed all over the floor. Well that wasn't right so we took some out and tried again and it frothed up all over the floor- it expands! (laughs) Never occurred to us. Nobody'd made butter before. So by the time we were done... I think there's still cream in the cracks of this floor. Disgusting. But we had a super abundance of cream- that's when we had kids. Bright bright yellow butter, lots of grass in it, yeah it was different. But we did all that. But now we do the garden thing." (Donna 306-318)

Myron and Donna's house plans and dreams and actuality are continually evolving. "...we're going to build. We've really been saying that we will do the addition and I've got that down from a brand new house addition to one room now, but as I say, it evolves." (Donna 157-159) "My concept is always altered a little bit but I figure rather than just building on, we should just do it like we built the chicken shed. The chicken shed is insulated under the floor the whole thing is insulated and you can move it. It's on sort of piles and you can move it. If he builds that the same way, depending what we do later on, if he ever does write a lot of books and makes some money so we can build a real house, that might not fit in with the new one. So eventually we might move that away too the whole thing can be his office then. He needs a library where you can walk in and actually see the books." (Donna 226-233)

Cougar and Emma

The work that Cougar and Emma engage in has evolved over the years. "I've sort of moved from being a worker with Cougar- I was on the STEP grant myself, I would take on the projects, organize the events. I moved from there to becoming more of management because after leaving our other group, we, he and I, then incorporated our own organization, The Green Society. And we both were directors at that point. Now he's gone and I am the only director and managing the staff myself, organizing setting the agenda of the campaigns and the direction that we move. So that's been sort of a new transition as well from.....sort of I guess the worker to the organizer. And I'm not really sure where I'll be going next so I feel like, I still feel very committed to the work that I, that we are doing." (Emma2-163-172) "...certainly in the last few years I've gotten into gardening more. And I'm pretty keen on that. I guess since I've been elected my lifestyle's changed in that, I have somewhat less control over my time, I'm expected to be at certain meetings, I'm expected to do certain things, so that's been a change. With being on Prairie City council for the last year and a half or so, I've been eating out more in

restaurants, so I haven't really had the time to be cooking as much as I used to at home, and that's a bit of a change." (Cougar 968-974)

Cougar and Emma are always in a process of evolving the way they do things in their day to day lives. "Like we've thought through a lot of this stuff and sometimes you might be pondering something for days or weeks or months, not actively, but it's in the back of your mind, what can you do next. And there are so many little things, that I think people can be doing in their daily lives and if they had a an inkling of what they were they'd probably pick up on them." (Cougar/Emma 356-362) "It sort of becomes a game which is what my brother pointed out to me is that he's always thinking of how to do that next thing so you know if you've got your garbage down like we have to one small can per month or every two months then the game becomes hmmm there's so little in that garbage can but what little thing can we pull out of there and lately I've been starting to think about popsicle sticks. Well what do you do with popsicle sticks? Well you know surely they could be chipped or used for mulch or something like that so I've started to save those in the basement in a little container, to save little bits and pieces of wood and figure out something to do with them. And one person would say who cares, why bother and someone else would say well that's too much, effort and for me it's you know, I like it. I enjoy doing stuff like that and I like climbing into garbage dumpsters and looking around and seeing what can be scrounged." (Cougar 377-390) "...then the challenge becomes again to figure out how can I live my life and not be supporting these big operations and by not driving I found it a good way to do that. Years ago I recognized, I drove very little, I mean I would avoid driving, and a number a couple of years ago I went to a, Emma and I and some friends, went to a conference down in Berkeley on ecological cities and we were at a workshop or something and you know it clicked in my mind I'd like to try to make that sort of last step of giving up my driver's license which is so much a symbol of you know, a rite of passage in our society. To try- I wasn't prepared to say that I'm going to give up my driver's license forever but I was prepared to try not having a drivers license to see how it worked. It's been three years or so and I've gotten along fine." (Cougar 650-661) "There are ways that once you really sorta make that leap of faith and say I don't want a car and we don't own a car and rarely use a car you start to think about how you go about doing things in a very different way and I would argue that you actually end up being, objectively, being ahead of the game. Now, you know, people have said to us, yeah but if you had kids it would be completely different. It probably would, but then we would be at that point and we'd try to figure out how to do it. So far we've managed to figure out how to make it

work and it's it has not been as huge a hardship as many would presume." (Cougar/Emma 719-727)

Stop

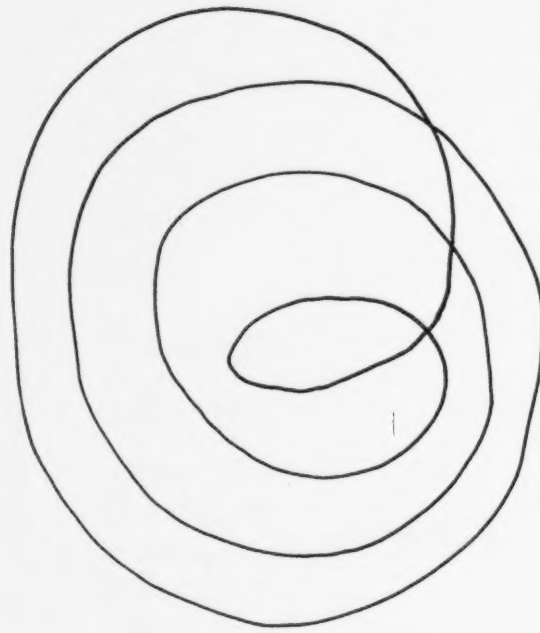
Stop's main transitions in her life have been with the raising of her children and the changes in the kinds of issues and the activism that she's involved in. "And actually the lady that writes most of the songs, the words to the songs, has a scrap book of Edmonton Raging Grannies.. It's getting quite thick now after two years of all the newspaper clippings and things we've done. Yeah. So I sort of feel that at this time in my life I am really enjoying being a Raging Granny and uh taking that message out. Although at one time, like in the '60's what we used to do was present briefs and write letters to government about different problems, and then during the '70's we did other kinds of activist things trying to call attention to the phosphates in detergents for instance." (Stop 256-264) "The concern about the nuclear business grew into a concern about other kinds of environmental problems. And through the early '70's and that's when we started a group called S.T.O.P. which stood for save tomorrow oppose pollution and we did studies on lead in pencils. I was interested to see just on the news the other day about there's still a concern, in Edmonton about lead in pencils or in colouring products for children." (Stop 116-121)

Fred and Dave

Fred's life is in the process of a major transition as he tries to live frugally, ease out of his business and work on the Green Community Project. "...finally the past three, four years I've been able to successfully in my mind, feel comfortable with rather than living extravagantly, living frugally. Like a lot of people ask me, why don't I have a big house, where's all the other trappings, where's my toys or whatever? I think I'm starting to get successful at dealing with that and staying away from all those extravagant lifestyles and trappings of lifestyles. And staying away from the, **trying** to stay away from materialistic status climbing and focus on, frugality and you know, one step at a time, towards that vision, that ideal." (Fred 53-60) "...while I'm still doing the business thing. So I'm hoping to exit from the business world in a year or two and live full time and work full time on the Green Community Project. Having used some of the resources from the business, for seed money for starter money, to achieve a lifestyle a total eco-lifestyle." (Fred 66-70)

Dave has come from a logging family to exploring the punk scene, to working on different farms and is now adapting to his life in the country. "I come out of a whole family of loggers and when I quit school the first thing my dad said well you have to go to work for me. That put me in the bush and I started working in the forest. About the time I started thinking about the planet and the destruction I was still working as a logger, I was working at sawmills and in the bush, power saw, running machines and I thought oh man there's a contradiction here, this is not working. And I was getting really miserable at work, I didn't want to work and I finally got out and said I've had enough of this I'm not going to go back, or force myself to go back to this anymore." (Dave 688-695) "If you hang out with different groups of people then you might end up being like those people. If you hang out with a bunch of punk rockers, you know eventually you're going to spike your hair and do punk rocker things. Like I did, I did that in the mid 70's and I had a good time at it and it was lots of fun." (Dave 170-173) On the Green Community project land there have been and continue to be changes. "Well it's slowly changing since I first lived there, it mostly was in a tent. I got a little trailer for awhile last year and then we built a little cabin there." (Dave 254-256) "Well yeah, important things are just doing more work on the soil, we have to bring in some manure and some sand to improve the soil for some of the things we want to grow out there. And plant some more different types of trees... Fruit trees, saskatoon, raspberries, all kinds of trees. And pick some more roots and start the herb garden too." (Fred/Dave 649-656)

To depict the evolving process of ecological living I have chosen a spiral/cycle that doesn't have an end. The cycle is continuous, can be entered at any point and is never the same at any two points. The spiral represents the evolving nature of living ecologically. It is non-hierarchical- the inner circles are not any closer to living ecologically than the outer circles but represents change and procession. The evolving cycle, unlike the idea of evolution, does not have a goal or end point in mind. To borrow an idea from Murray Bookchin it is ever "being and becoming". One is living in the present while living, changing, adapting, evolving, becoming, something else.



symbol representing evolving process

Figure 3: Evolving Symbol

Dialectic and Paradox

Interconnected circles and paradoxes

In trying to narrow down a topic on which to do my master's thesis I found myself spinning in circles. In thinking about the "environmental crisis" the circle would widen out to include global size issues and problems and then contract down into a pit at an individual level. The interesting part about this circling is that it epitomizes the interconnectedness of problems and the paradoxes involved.

This is a time of danger, anomie, suffering, crack on the streets, changing climate, war, hunger, homelessness, spreading toxins, garbage barges plying the seven seas, desertification, poverty, and the permanent threat of Armageddon. Ours is the age of paradox. The modern obsession to control nature through science and technology is resulting in a less predictable and less bountiful natural world. (Orr, 1992 p.102)

In your mind return to the image of a spider web. The interconnectedness of life on earth is a web. Think of two ends of a strand of spider silk. These attachment points can be opposites which can create paradoxes or contradictions. These attachment points can also be intermediate or adjacent and represent choices. Dialectics are changing, dynamic, tensions - between those points - which creates the corresponding paradoxes. The web of life on earth is interconnectedness which also creates paradoxes. Paradoxes- are opposing points- dialectics are tension- between points-all of which contribute to the web maintaining it's structure. "In building the web the spider takes account of the developing loads and tensions and tries to equalise the tensions so that the stress in all members is the same - better to resist the stress of sudden impacts." (Hillyard, 1994 p.108)

Under stress or impact, strands of web cross and paradoxes become tangled. For example, North American individuals tend to live very high impact lifestyles and need to change their consumption levels. Individuals are not as much of a problem as large multinational corporations, but individuals support multinational corporations, although they can have very little effect on how multinationals do business. And how does social change happen anyway? No one has figured that one out, and the only person I can really, at the bottom line, change is myself. So the circle spins on until I lay my head on my desk in defeat and go have a cup of coffee that was probably grown in a developing country, picked by an exploited worker and sprayed with deadly chemicals. Augghh!

And so we are by no means divided, or readily divisible, into environmental saints and sinners. But there are legitimate distinctions that need to be made. These are distinctions of degree and of consciousness. Some people are less destructive than others, and some are more conscious of their destruction than others. (Berry, 1977 p.18)

By existing as a being on the earth we have an impact- some of it which is destructive. The task now in the process of living ecologically is to lessen our destructiveness, be conscious of our own destructiveness and in some way cope with the dialectics and paradoxes that come with living.

It becomes difficult to separate the dialectics from the paradoxes. One can not exist without the other. A dialectic can not exist without the opposing points or paradox. A paradox can not exist without the dynamic, changing tension between two points which is a dialectic. These two factors are the elements that provide the intricate, complex structure of the interconnected web of life. The coresearchers experience paradoxes and dialectics in their everyday life.

Paradoxes

paradox: 1. a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement. 2. a person or thing conflicting with a preconceived notion of what is reasonable or possible. (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990 p.862)

One dilemma, for the coresearchers, is that even in changing the way they think and live there are still paradoxes and contradictions in their lives, some which they recognize and continually struggle with. This becomes apparent through their own words. Emma struggles with being consistent. "Carmen:....so do you see the way you live as a form of resistance to consumer society or to present society? You kinda answered that but...Emma: Yeah, Yes. The obvious answer is yes. And I feel that it's been a very conscious decision to do that, and that I still battle with that all the time. When I'm in New York for example, when I was there last week I was really you know I would shop a little bit, and just bop into stores, and would just drool over this beautiful clothing, that I knew, you know I made this decision and I have to be consistent and here and it doesn't fit to be wearing a skimpy little lace gown. (laughs) So it's a decision that I've made and I need to be consistent with my ideals and I think it's possible to be consistent. I think that the longer I try to maintain consistency the easier it's going to get." (Emma?-182-190)

One of Paula's strong values is anti-materialism yet, "I look at things that we got a long time ago that have been in storage and I hate to give em away but I've never used them. There's some kind of satisfaction in actually knowing it's out there or a surprise looking at again after five or ten years and then putting it back and still not using it. Yet I think that probably most of the things here we use." (Paula 264-268)

Myron was reflecting on the breakdown of their community and small town and recognizes his paradoxical role in the process. "Here we do the same thing right here, we don't shop in Foothills, but I don't know why Foothills business men have to charge so much but it's definitely a lot cheaper to go to a great big store in the city and the end result is that the amount of gas I spent in driving there I go there and shop and the amount of money I save I could take five trips on the money I saved as opposed to going to Foothills and paying what they charge there and I don't know what the mechanism is there but generally pretty soon the people in Foothills have to shut down because there's not enough and then the next thing you know I can't get anything in Foothills." (Myron 484-491)

Emma and Cougar are very conscious of what they eat but there are paradoxes and dilemmas involved. "...we never buy California grown lettuce or anything. When we go to restaurants, of course, we have a salad and it's California grown lettuce but um," (Cougar/Emma 221) Dave struggles along the same line, "I noticed, the more I stay in the city the harder time, the harder time I have to try and live sensibly. There's so much around, so much distraction. My big thing is uh gardening and I believe strongly in organics but you know there's days I'll go out and go to the Safeway and I'll buy some sprayed chemical food from California and I'll eat it. But I know deep down inside that I'm slowly getting away from that." (Dave 122-126) Cougar and Emma were telling me about their reasons for being vegetarian and I asked, "Carmen: You're not vegan though?" "Cougar: No. And I guess you know in my mind there's a bit of a contradiction there that I'm prepared to live with. I've always said that I don't like killing animals and getting milk from them or eggs from them isn't killing them so, that's okay. But in fact there is some exploitation of the animals clearly for those products. We get free range eggs from the market, but the milk, there is some exploitation and I haven't quite got around it and we've reduced considerably our consumption of milk and dairy products but we still do eat some. And there's a bit of a contradiction there." (Cougar/Emma 319-327)

Stop has been thinking about the issues around eating meat and other issues regarding animals. "But uh well that's another whole thing should we be keeping animals as pets? But dogs I think are sort of a pleasure and they do have this you know this kind of loyalty

to human beings that's sort of nice, I like dogs." (Stop 503-505) Stop also refers to her dilemmas about conflicting beliefs about household cleaners. "I try not to use harsh chemical and stuff in my household although I do have Dutch Cleanser. I mean everybody has to give it a good clean once in awhile. But then you can use, uh baking soda is a good alternative for cleaning." (Stop 52-54)

There seems to be some level of "shoulds" involved with living ecologically. There are "trendy" actions that it seems one must do in order to be an environmentalist such as cleaning with baking soda and vinegar or not driving a car all the time. Fred refers to this. "It's difficult because I could look at myself and see myself as contradictory you know in terms of some of the things I do, in the city, drive everyday. I don't own a bicycle. I would only use it in the city for recreation. I feel it would still be inconvenient for me to ride the 20 or 30 blocks to work. And yet I wonder sometimes, is that a cop out, is that right? So. I still have a lot of things that are programmed in me." (Fred 70-75) Fred's business is involved with the oilfield yet he takes that money and puts it toward the Green Community Project. I asked him about his work. "Oilfield supply, supply the things an oil company uses everyday including safety items like hard hats and things like that but most of it is pipe and valves. Carmen: Right and you wanna get out of that eventually? Fred: Yes I feel that I've accomplished all that I wanted to accomplish a bit more than I thought I would and I feel there's no more need for me, there's no more growth, that's all. I'm just itching to uh get out of business. Itching to lose my job (laughs)" (Fred 678-684)

Cougar and Fred talk about the struggle between their ideals and reality. Between their own ideals and perceptions and expectations of others. "I do rely on Emma once in awhile for a ride and on taxis. I guess, you know, it's really hard in our society probably any society to be totally consistent. So you have to find ways to live with yourself and to recognize it and to appreciate it you know for me to appreciate how far I'm able to push things and to change things within my lifestyle. To go in a direction that I'd like to go in. And nobody's going to be perfect." (Cougar 661-666) "I realize how I have certain values I want to be perfect and live perfect and achieve a low impact lifestyle for myself. But yet when it comes to doing it and looking at how does a person, how am I going to do that? It's not so easy. I feel that there's you know, in me anyways, there's definitely a bit of a struggle. There's these new values, eco-values, you could say, or values of respecting nature and values of not having too big an impact on the planet. At the same time, having been brought up and having developed materialistic values. You know still connected to, still wanna hang onto a job, wanna hang onto what is culturally acceptable, wanna hang

onto having things that people perceive as being successful or being something. That's still there. I have to, deal with that so." (Fred 16-27) Fortunately the coresearchers are not living saints and there is no perfect life. There may be hope for the rest of us yet.

Dialectics

Think of a dialectic as two points between which there is changing tension. Two opposites may occur simultaneously. Both points may occur at different times depending on the situation, or there may be a choice to be made. Tensions between opposing points, or choices, or seemingly opposite experiences or feelings, like paradoxes, all seem to be an inherent part of living as a human on the earth.

The concept of dialectic is complex and intricate, like a spider's web. It can be defined and explained in many ways. One way is the dictionary definition;

dialectic: inquiry into metaphysical contradictions and their solutions...the existence or action of opposing social forces etc. (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990 p.322)

Another way to define dialectic is explained through the thoughts of Murray Bookchin;

A "dialectical view of life" is a very special form of process philosophy. Its emphasis is not on change, but on development. It is eductive rather than deductive, mediated rather than merely processual, and cumulative rather than continuous....From a dialectical viewpoint, a change in a given level of biotic, communal, or, for that matter, social organization consists not simply of a new, possibly more complex, ensemble of "feedback loops." Rather, it consists of qualitatively new attributes, interrelationships, and degrees of subjectivity that express and radically condition the fact that a new potential has emerged, opening a new realm of possibility with its own unique self-directive mode of activity - ...Moreover, this new potential is itself the result of other actualizations of potentialities that, taken together historically and cumulatively, constitute a developmental continuum... (Bookchin, 1990 p.179-80)

Envision a dialectic not as a static thing but as a fluctuating entity that is not so much tension between two opposing poles but is a changing dynamic that evolves over time and according to individual, historical and cultural situations.

There are a variety of dialectics that I saw within the transcripts of my conversations with the coresearchers- that I believe illustrate further the process of living ecologically.

farm routine/ work routine

"It's often difficult to go to work and then come back and be fully relaxed. Or if you're at the farm for a couple of days and you begin to get into a routine and it's hard to think of

going to work and being in an office and dealing with a lot of petty things that have no meaning, at least in my life." (Paula 339-342)

convenience vs effort

I talked with Donna about how she preserves food. "Carmen: Do you do any canning? Donna: No but I should. Carmen: Did you used to? Donna: I have lots of jars and I have done canning I just prefer the freezing. but um...Carmen: It's a lot easier? Donna: Yes it's easier but, with all the electricity you use all winter with it plugged in you should really can." (Donna 97-104)

One of the key principles that Cougar and Emma use to make their living ecological is to make an alternative easier than the old, less ecological, way of doing things. "Yeah the trick about recycling that I found over the years even sort of doing it for twenty years or so is it's gotta be easy and it's gotta be as easy as throwing something out, or almost as easy as throwing something out. So if you've got that piece of paper in your hand and there's a garbage can right there but to recycle it you have to walk across the road and down the stairs and down the hall it's not so likely that you're gonna do it especially if you're trying to juggle a bunch of things. So. If the garbage can was way far away and all the recycling centre was right there, there would be no garbage thrown out. So, for people it would be easier to recycle that to throw it in the garbage. I think that that's where we should be heading. It should be easier to recycle or reuse or reduce something than to throw it in the garbage ideally. And that's what's so neat about composting is it really is easier to do that than to throw it in the garbage. I mean our compost bin is closer than the co-op's garbage area so. But even so, I think there are a lot of people in the co-op who don't bother composting, 'cause they haven't quite figured it out yet. Wouldn't you say? (asks Emma)" (Cougar/Emma 451-466)

Because of Cougar and Emma's decision to be as car free as possible they have figured out other ways of buying things they need. "Emma: So we just got it couriered over you know bought it over the phone with a Visa card, had a courier pick it up. It cost five bucks or something and we got a three year supply of this soap for really really really cheap. Cougar: That's another one of those,... you know sort of surprising twists. You'd think not having a car, that getting things would be a real hassle. Like how do we do our shopping how do we possibly? The question might be phrased, how do we get to Superstore to do our shopping? Well, (laughs) we don't. We do it in other ways and I think what Emma has mentioned is a perfect example, maybe a normal way, to wash your clothes is once a week, or once a month, you pick up a box of detergent at Superstore and

you bring it home and you keep doing that month after month after month and it takes you time and effort and what we've done with one phone call and with a credit card, not even having to move from our room, we get two year supply of you know ecological clothes cleaning detergent, delivered to our house. So it's easier for us to get it that it is for someone who drives to get it. Because we sort of thought it through and do it a bit smarter. And it was really inexpensive and it was easy for us to do. So, we also like to stock up on stuff, so we've got toilet paper for a year, this detergent for a year, dishwashing detergent for a year so you just, have the stuff around so you don't have to be hopping in the car every week to go out and buy supplies." (Cougar/Emma 504-523)

money/no money

Another issue for the coresearchers is money. Unfortunately the way our society is presently set up, there is a need for some amount of cash. All of the coresearchers have some outside income and all think of money in a variety of ways. Emma: "...we've been able to lead a really low income lifestyle. I mean this is the first time since his election that we've made any money. We've lived real low income and ... Cougar: Lived on probably \$10 000/ year. Emma: And that's because, one of the major reasons, is because we haven't had to deal with transportation expenses. So when you think of all of that then you think of taking a cab once a month for 15 bucks is nothing. It's just part of the equation, I know that bus fare and cab fare is a choice that in the long run is so much more economical for us." (Cougar/Emma 739--747) Fred earns a comfortable amount of money and could afford to live extravagantly if he chose to but he is using it in a different way. "Taking some of the money, and what I've been able to do over the past few years is take all the extra money I can and apply it to a project that I'm interested in which is the Green Community Project. So all, all my extra money now goes there, and I'm still trying to find ways to live more frugally." (Fred 60-64) Dave discussed the idea of earning a bit of money by doing what you enjoy or value, rather than spending most of your time doing a job to earn money, to do what you enjoy in your minimal spare time. "Why not just make a living or what do what you value? This person values, spare time, this person values gardening, reading, writing, carpentry whatever. I think one important requisite is to achieve the situation where you don't need a lot of money. Not too long ago a lot of people were living comfortably without too much money. And having a high quality lifestyle and spending a lot of time with their friends, spending a lot of time with their family, children were getting a lot of attention and a lot of interactive time with their parents." (Fred/Dave 415-421)

security/risk

Fred discussed the tension between security in the way things are and the risk in giving up his job and the amount of money he earns. But on the other hand the lack of security in working for money. Which is more secure? Which is happier? Fred spent his childhood living very frugally with wood heat, kerosene lamps etc. He refers to that experience as 'the other way'. Because he experienced some; "...Of the other way. And now I'm not so scared to give up this new way. Don't have to hang onto it because it doesn't mean security. Because I know that there's another way, that's just as secure and could be just as happy or even happier. But I'm not so scared anymore to give up materialism although there's still some fears...fear of fear. (laughs)" (Fred 458-462)

time/money

Roger talks about his experience of having a lot of things to do, sometimes, too much time or not enough time, and never enough money. "Well there are always things to do. One thing about what I do is that there's never any shortage, no matter what your excuses. That's another discovery you make is that really there isn't enough time to do a lot. There's always something that can't be done. And I guess too much time and not enough money can be the rule." (Roger 112-116)

stay/go

Another dialectic that Emma discussed is whether urban or rural or some combination is the place to be. "I don't know if Prairie City is where I wanna be all my life, maybe it is. I have two minds about that. One I'd like to sort of be thinking bigger and maybe on a more Canadian level or something I can see him, or us actively leading at a more national level probably. But my other inclination would be to just drop out of the scene altogether and move up to Whitehorse or into the northern boreal forest or something and have a family and work through computer modems or something. You know do a newspaper publication or something, I don't know. I mean I'm of two minds of that I don't really know which direction I'll go. I suspect that we'll remain the urbanites that we are and just become more influential and powerful in creating change. Positive change for our world,..." (Emma2 229-338)

kids or not

Another issue for women and for couples is the issue of children. "...but you know I also have that more feminine family based root." (Emma2-239) "I think about it a lot and the older I get the more I think about it. I'm only 31 so I feel like I still have lots of time to be

making decisions. Like I don't feel stressed like I need to make a decision right now but I've over the last couple of years, I've probably talked to 500 people, everyone I meet I ask them, "So do you recommend having kids? What do you think about kids?" Men and women, and you know every, just about everybody really recommends having kids and that it's been such a big part of their lives and that probably influencing me in thinking I should. But at the same time I feel committed enough that, I know it would, so radically change my lifestyle and my focus in terms of work and Cougar's focus in terms of work and I feel like we're so much more effective. We're able to be so effective. I think, from my perspective, we're being effective. Only because we're committing so much time and energy to it and by having kids I would have to reduce my time so much. I think at this point I feel that I would be prepared to give up kids. For the longer term goal of dealing with the crisis that we're going through right now and trying to effect change at the local and global level. Cougar now is thinking of, that he would maybe wanna have kids but...I think I'm enjoying my freedom and I'm enjoying the high of organizing and getting people organized and influencing change so. I'm not sure." (Emma2-243-259) Paula and Roger consciously decided not to have children for a number of reasons. "I just see a big problem is that the earth cannot support the number of people that are on the earth and our consumption patterns and I guess that that's a real driving thought with me. I can't help commenting on it when I go into someone's home or see somebody who's pregnant, and I just say well, it's really nice to have children, I suppose. It must be wonderful to have young people around and for most people to have them in their own image but it must also be very worrisome because you don't know what kind of life you're bringing this person into..." (Paula 385-387) "But we also have to come to terms with major issues the most important which I think is overpopulation. Our impact on the globe and yet I remember getting in an argument with a Maoist that I used to work with who believed that we could have as many people in Canada as live in China if we all lived very very simplistically, had very simple needs. And I would say, to him, I would say overpopulation is a problem and he would say that's sort of a western notion, that's being elitist, that's sort of like putting the blame on India and China and if you know what I'm getting at. I'm saying that and he would say that it's us because of our consumptive ways that are making the less fortunate people go without and that's true but by the same token there's just simply too many of us and that... there's a middle ground there- we all have to live simply, use less, make do with less so that other people can have but by the same token if we have a good social net a lot of people are less inclined to breed a lot of dependents. Who then they feel will look after them, for whatever reason. So there's some middle ground between those two aspects and I guess that's really all I want to say on that." (Roger 520-535) Paula also speaks

about how the decision to not have children affects them in their rural community. "If you don't have children then that cuts you out of a lot of the community activities or socializing that a lot of our neighbours would be involved in...So I just seek out people in the larger community that have my interests." (Paula 294-300)

Technology

When I spoke on a casual basis to people about ecological living some of them thought that it was merely a technological problem. That if we only had the right technology then all our problems would be solved. But there is no "correct" technology. A dialectic that seems integral to the process of living ecologically is the choices to be made concerning technology. Wendell Berry (1990 p.172) writes some very practical criteria for making choices about technology.

To make myself as plain as I can, I should give my standards for technological innovation in my own work. They are as follows:

1. The new tool should be cheaper than the one it replaces.
2. It should be at least as small in scale as the one it replaces.
3. It should do work that is clearly and demonstrably better than the one it replaces.
4. It should use less energy than the one it replaces.
5. If possible, it should use some form of solar energy, such as that of the body.
6. It should be repairable by a person of ordinary intelligence, provided that he or she has the necessary tools.
7. It should be purchasable and repairable as near to home as possible.
8. It should come from a small, privately owned shop or store that will take it back for maintenance and repair.
9. It should not replace or disrupt anything good that already exists, and this includes family and community relationships.

From listening to my coresearchers talk and reflect about their uses and choices of technology I began to understand and to see examples of the tension between "high tech" or "state of the art" technologies and "low tech" machines, inventions or ways of doing things or solving problems. In the following examples from the coresearchers I will explore some of the issues and thoughts surrounding technology and living ecologically. Some of their personal choices and issues relate to Berry's criteria.

There are many problems that need addressing within the lives of the coresearchers, some of the solutions are "high tech" and some of the solutions are "low tech." Roger decided on electric fencing rather than permanent cross fencing. "As well as using a plan for rotational grazing. I found the best thing is electric fencing. That's at least one area where I'm state of the art (laughs). I may still do a lot of hand work or pump water by hand, put up square

bales, build haystacks by hand and stook by hand and so forth but electric fence, the modern type of electric fence is terrific." (Roger 209-213) [Roger's electric fence is run off of batteries that are charged by small portable solar panels.] Paula takes part in a visit from people of the Philippines in the summer. "It's in the summer time so I have a solar shower and we have a lot of high tech technology with our solar panels and we have a lot of low tech like our pump you know (laughs) the bucket under the sink, things like that. So they can see that even in the first world that a lot of the trappings aren't necessary for survival and a good life." (Paula 349-353) [A solar shower is a black plastic container that is filled with water, heated by the sun and then it is raised up in the air to use gravity to force the water through a nozzle to have a warm shower.]

Cougar and Emma are always questioning the way things 'are done' and searching for alternative, sensible solutions to problems. "And it's always sort of baffled me why in our climate we use all this electricity to keep stuff cold when half the year it's cold enough outside or too cold and we could, if we put our minds to it, figure out a way to shunt that cold air into a box that could keep the fridge cold, with a small fan rather than all this energy using, pretty intensely, using a heat pump at the back of the fridge for cooling down the box. So I've started to take large yogurt containers of water from inside I stick them outside overnight and they freeze into a chunk of ice, for free right? Then take that chunk of ice and put it in the fridge and that'll keep the fridge cold. It's like the old ice box idea. So it'll reduce the amount of electricity I would think probably substantially the amount of electricity needed to keep the box cold just by taking actually the cold air, the cold energy from outside and putting it in the box. So, it's always, sort of a game that you can play to figure out what to do next." (Cougar/Emma 412-424)

Fred and Dave don't always assume that the low tech option is necessarily the best. But ask questions about options. For example; "...is the idea of horses, having a couple horses to work the land. We've got a tiller right now. Do we want a tiller or a horse? Which is more beneficial or which is less destructive? You know we really have to weigh the differences." (Fred/Dave 732-735) "But still that's another thing that you've gotta look after. A machine if you wanna go away you put it in the garage and you go away you don't have to worry about it. A horse is a little different you have to be there you have to have a place for the horse to run around. You have to have a shelter for it, and you have to look after it. If it's a mare and it gets pregnant you have to look after it. You have to learn all of these things about the animal. And there's more things, more work to do so..." (Fred/Dave 742-748)

The coresearchers are not Luddites, (anti-technology) but they do think critically about technology. Connecting their personal everyday challenges, for example transportation needs, and eating habits, to wider mazes of societal and ecological problems. "I'm out in the country now and it seems like you need a vehicle more to get around. I come to the city once in awhile but I try my best once I get to the city to park it and walk or take the bus once I'm in the city. And I try to buy you know a decent vehicle that's good on fuel. That helps a bit but still there's the actual idea of driving a vehicle and all the things connected to it, not just the pollution of it, not always good things." (Dave 148-153) Cougar and Emma address the challenge of wanting fresh vegetables in the winter. But it is impractical to grow the foods we're used to think of, like lettuce, all year round. They also delve into the issues around eating food that can be purchased in Safeway. "...when you think about it it's very unlikely that we would be able to grow fresh vegetables, in our homes in the middle of winter without any greenhouses or high tech equipment of anything. Now on the one hand a person can buy lettuce from California and it's chemicalized farming, and there's all the energy involved in irrigation and shipping that lettuce 1500 miles or however far it is in refrigerator trucks and getting it to the store and you have to drive to the store to get it and all that stuff. So that's one option for greens in your salad. And the other option is to do it yourself with a bit of water and you've got incredibly nutritious organic vegetables right there in your kitchen where you want them. To me it's a marvellous, simple, it's almost too simple, that most people just don't catch on to it." (Cougar/Emma 239-250) [Cougar is referring to growing sprouts such as mung bean sprouts or alfalfa sprouts. This is really very easy, all you need is fresh water, seeds or beans, and a jar and is a great local source of fresh vegetables. I learned how to do it by getting a book out of the library on growing sprouts.] Using a complex and marvellous natural system involves not understanding how it works but understanding the components that promote success. This works again with compost. "...it all gets recycled by nature, marvellously, incredibly, without any engineers or large trucks to haul it to some complex plant where everything breaks down and doesn't work properly. And this is done right on site by non-technical people and natural systems and it goes back into our garden and helps to grow our carrots and the other foods that we eat in the summer and some of it we preserve..." (Cougar/Emma 427-432) Composting is not rocket science and it's small scale. It happens in our garbage cans, and fridges all on it's own. Composting also links us back in with the fertility of the soil and participating in the cycle of nature that will help provide us with food again in the summer. Composting decreases significantly the amount of garbage that a household puts out in the alley to go to the landfill site, or that gets taken to the local dump. The public involvement around landfill sites is a situation of "not in my

backyard." Very few people, for obvious reasons, want a landfill site near where they live. But with composting it can occur, unoffensively, in a corner of your own backyard. The compost then becomes incorporated into the soil to grow your food, and then the scraps end up back in the compost pile. Connecting you and your food to natural cycles.. Another option that Cougar and Emma use is worm composting. Red wiggler worms can eat up to one-quarter of their body weight in organic matter every day. Your fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, everything that would go in a compost pile, can be turned into rich black "castings" by worms in a container in your house. This is a great fertilizer and an excellent option for people who don't have yards.

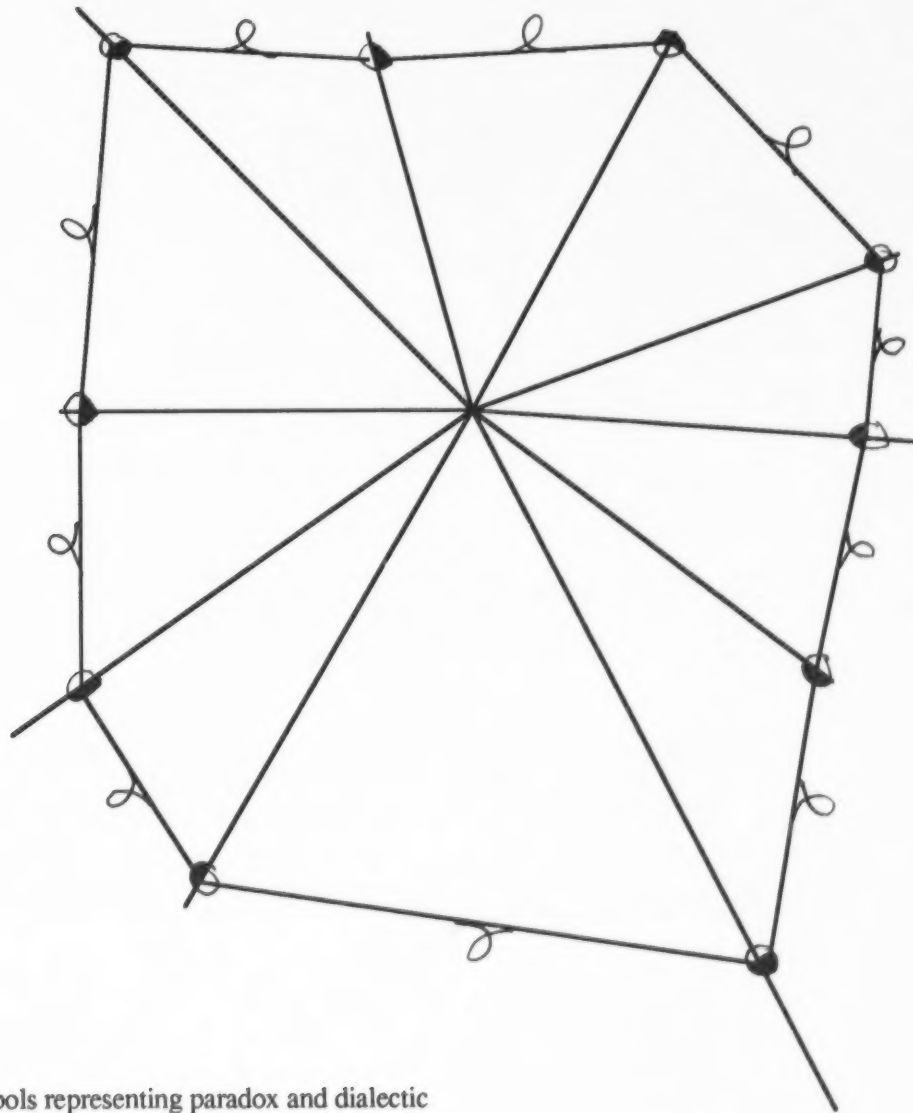
Because the coresearchers choose to live with low cash incomes they learn to do things for themselves. Myron is a good example of this. "Because people don't realize that you don't have to pay taxes on money you don't earn. That is if you fix your own vehicle then that means you don't have to pay someone money that you pay taxes on to fix it. If you need vehicles badly just how you juggle vehicles there's three or four thousand dollars worth of self employment because instead of paying a mechanic all that extra money. If you grow a big garden, if you do that right then I think that must be another couple thousand dollars there." (Myron 189-194) But, technology is often complicated, can be difficult to learn to use and is sometimes impossible to fix, but it doesn't have to be. Having self-directed learning skills enables some of the coresearchers to deal effectively with technology. Myron fixes his own vehicles and made Donna a washing machine out of three different ones that were all broken. Cougar and Emma speak of the ability to understand and manage technology in terms of bicycles contrasted with cars. Emma: "So almost anyone can ride a bike young and old. Really, it's such simple technology people can even learn how to fix their own bikes. Cougar: Yeah I guess there's a real elegance there in the simplicity of the bicycle, which I really appreciate. But with a car something goes wrong you sort of start at the engine and scratch your head and say, Geez. I mean you need a mechanic, you need high tech tools you need a part from Ford Motor Company from half-way across the continent. And you're sort of disempowered, whereas with a bicycle it's right there you can pretty well figure out what's going on and it's usually very simple tools that you need to fix it. I guess in terms of empowering people and people sort of taking control of their own lives I think the bicycle really helps in that, helping people to go in that direction. And frankly I would like to be as much in control of my own life as I can be." (Cougar/Emma 812-824)

The coresearchers asked questions of a practical nature that are specific to their own situation and own needs. They also ask questions from a wider global or system perspective for example around issues of cars or California grown food. The first step in controlling or deliberately choosing technology is to question it. Questioning technology and making conscious choices is something that anyone can participate in. Jerry Mander, an American cultural critic, in his book In the Absence of the Sacred, writes critically about technology. Mander provides a list of ideas on how to continually question technology.

I offer here a little list of reminders that I keep pinned above my own desk. They help me maintain appropriate attitudes to protect against the one-sided information onslaught. Perhaps they'll be useful to you.

1. Since most of what we are told about new technology comes from its proponents, be deeply skeptical of all claims.
2. Assume all technology "guilty until proven innocent."
3. Eschew the idea that technology is neutral or "value free." Every technology has inherent and identifiable social, political, and environmental consequences.
4. The fact that technology has a natural flash and appeal is meaningless. Negative attributes are slow to appear.
5. Never judge a technology by the way it benefits you personally. Seek a holistic view of its impacts. The operative question is not whether it benefits you, but who it benefits most? And to what end?
6. Keep in mind that an individual technology is only one piece of a larger web of technologies, "megatechnology." The operative question here is how the individual technology fits the larger one.
7. Make distinctions between technologies that primarily serve the individual or the small community (e.g., solar energy) and those that operate on a scale outside of community control (e.g., nuclear energy). The latter kind is the major problem of the day.
8. When it is argued that the benefits of the technological lifeway are worthwhile despite harmful outcomes, recall that Lewis Mumford referred to these alleged benefits as "bribery." Cite the figures about crime, suicide, alienation, drug abuse, as well as environmental and cultural degradation.
9. Do not accept the homily that "once the genie is out of the bottle you cannot put it back," or that rejecting technology is impossible. Such attitudes induce passivity and confirm victimization.
10. In thinking about technology within the present climate of technological worship, emphasize the negative. This brings balance. Negativity is positive. (Mander, 1991 p.49-50)

The contradictions and tensions, paradoxes and dialectics provide structure, form and challenge within the web. I have chosen a circle, half black and half white to represent paradox. I have also chosen a loop to represent dialectic. I fit it into the web in this way:



symbols representing paradox and dialectic

Figure 4: Dialectics and Paradoxes

Inner And Outer Process

Entering into the circles again, things have to start somewhere right? "Lasting societal transformation begins with and rests on transformation of the individual" (Russell, 1988 p.228) "To live an ecological lifestyle is to change yourself first. The way you think about things, look at things." (Fred/Dave 250-251) One place to start is expressed in this way; "The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands and then work outward from there." (Robert Pirsig) In heart and head are an inner process of caring and questioning. In hands is an outer process of action- making visible one's inner caring and questioning.

Caring

"UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." (Geisel, 1971) Caring becomes integral to the development of the whole person. J. Glenn Gray describes this person as "one who has fully grasped the simple fact that his self is fully implicated in those beings around him, human and nonhuman, and who has learned to care deeply about them." (Gray, 1984 p.34) How does one begin to care about the earth, to care about other people, to care about anything? I don't think that anyone knows the answer to that question. The important factor is that people do care. The inner process of caring is referred to on different levels and in various stages of optimism or cynicism by some of the coresearchers. "So I used to think that if people were given the right information that they would that they would make the right decisions but I don't know whether that's true anymore." (Stop132-133) Dave: "It really gets confusing and I went through a stage where I was just mad at the world. Everybody else was causing the problems, the government was causing the problems the industry was causing the problems and I always had someone to blame, but I never really thought it was me that was really to blame. It was me who was taking all this negative information and becoming a negative person. Fred: Becoming cynical." (Fred/Dave 231-237) Emma talks about how travelling affected her. "...so that had a large impact in terms of where, where I am today and what I'm doing today. Sort of giving me that global perspective, both environmental and social justice." (Emma2:308-310) For Roger the process of caring began from experiences he had as a child near his home. "I think there's probably a connection with people who have a, or a least with me, who have a sensitivity toward a natural environment that has a lot to do with how you're raised or a certain type of imprinting that went on when you were a kid and that certainly is true with me. That isn't to say that if you were raised in

an urban setting in a ghetto that you necessarily would not have a sensitivity towards the natural environment. If you took a kid out into the wilds, no I shouldn't say wilds, but in a scenic or beautiful place that he wouldn't appreciate it. He may very well. But I think a lot depends on a person's early sensitivity or early introduction to wild places. And where I was raised it was in the suburbs but a very very beautiful suburbs that was houses that were built, they weren't tract houses. They were individual houses but they were built in an old forest area, a deciduous forest, that had at one time been selectively harvested but they were very mature trees of diverse species. A lovely beautiful place and there were these, to my age, to a kid, there were these ancient chestnut tree stumps that were mammoth that were a relic from when there were chesnut trees.... um uh I'd let you know that I came from a dysfunctional family and I got a lot of meaning from those woods from that place and I didn't learn until later that I really had come from a dysfunctional family it was normal to me. So there was a lot of, so that woods, gave me a lot." (Roger 542-562) Cougar speaks of caring as being distinct from an intellectual concern. "...being concerned about the environment it, for a lot of people, it's sort of an intellectual thing. You know protecting the environment, the hole in the ozone, greenhouse effect, all this stuff that you only understand on an intellectual level. But for me, being concerned about the environment is also, it's a personal thing, I don't know if it's an aesthetic thing but it's certainly something that you can feel in your bones." (Cougar 749-755)

Experiences where people can feel a sense of wonder, can see themselves as part of nature, can "feel it in their bones," are important. In a culture where most opportunities involve less interaction with nature and more interaction with technology, do outdoor education, outdoor recreation, general education, and "active living" have a role to play? Are they enough?

Questioning ??????

"In one's own head..." relates to learning and thinking and questioning. This is an inner process that is integral to living ecologically. "Ecological sustainability is the task of finding alternatives to the practices that got us in trouble in the first place; it is necessary to rethink agriculture, shelter, energy use, urban design, transportation, economics, community patterns, resource use, forestry, the importance of wilderness and our central values." (Orr, 1992 p.24) The coresearchers have taught themselves alternative ways of doing things. They are continually learning and adapting while living an alternative

lifestyle. They are able to think critically and ask questions in part because they have skills in self-education.

Education is not necessarily about attending classes or formal instruction. Ivan Illich (1970) writes about the paradox of obligatory schooling. "Together we have come to realize that for most men (sic) the right to learn is curtailed by the obligation to attend school." (Illich, 1970 intro) I think that one of the characteristics that assists the coresearchers in their efforts in living ecologically, is the ability to "deschool" themselves and become self educated. Many of the things that the coresearchers can do, know about and are informed on, they did not learn in "school" but in life - they taught themselves. Illich makes a very important distinction between schooling and learning. Illich writes about, "The current search for new educational funnels must be reversed into the search for their institutional inverse: educational webs which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring." (Illich, 1970 intro)

All of the coresearchers talked about the importance of continually learning. Paula learns about issues and information that are integral to her activism work. "I guess one big thing that's changed is that I've gotten quite involved in the environment group and in 1989 we presented briefs at the ____ hearings and this has meant researching into issues that I'd never thought I'd be doing. Right now we're making presentations on the industrial landfill site so I'm learning things about geotherm liners and clay liners and subsoil hydrogeology and monitoring wells and leachate dispersment and all these other things that I'd rather not know about." (Paula 128-134)

Books play an important role in learning. That role could be to find information, and apply it as Stop does; "...and when you look at the cancer statistics in the early 1900's, and I just found this out lately so I wrote it down..." (Stop 143-144) The role of books could also be to explore different perspectives on issues or for inspiration. Fred told me that Murray Bookchin's, Toward an Ecological Society had a large impact on his thinking. Roger told me, "one of my mentors is Helen and Scott Nearing." (Roger 644) Most of the skills that the coresearchers possess, they have developed in informal ways rather than in formal education settings. Many examples of informal or self-education can be found in the stories of the coresearchers such as Roger and Paula learning to farm by doing it or Donna learning about how to make butter through trial and error. Dave speaks of this from the perspective of someone who dropped out of high school. "Cause I do like growing herbs

and making herbal medicines and stuff so that'll go hand in hand actually it's like hands on experience. Instead of learning this in a school and from books, I'll have hands on experience." (Dave 348-351) Myron speaks of the difference between formal schooling and reality education on the farm, as well as, the role that books have played in his life. "...you went to school to get away from the reality education you were getting cause everything was reality. From splitting wood to riding a horse to haying to mowing to trampling hay to and after awhile kids like me just looked forward to going to school. It would relieve the relentless physical work that you were doing around the farm. And school was, really more as I look back on it, a generator of fantasy. I mean books, why do I collect books? I think it goes back from the days when I went to school in those early grades and I realized that I could find information in a book. I asked someone how to make gunpowder, that was in us kids that were in grade six or seven, by the time we were in that grade we were formulating gun powder. And we were doing things. During school we went into the 2x4 (floor, roof and four walls) situation to be able to learn to read and write and the complexity of mathematics or whatever. But it was books and a blackboard and you were inside the room. When it was recess the teacher took off to her teacherage and so on and you had an hour and an hour seemed like an eternity. We would crawl through the fence into the farmer's pasture and really had unbelievable fun. We'd light a fire and brew our tea and actually that pasture was like a universe, to me. There were three or four of us and so many things to do and sometimes we would stay after school and crawl under the wire and play around in there. There was no swimming lessons except in the summer but there was always the swimming hole when you were out fishing. You had no controlled education." (Myron 275-294)

These experiences of the coresearchers resonate with Illich's idea of a new education system.

A good educational system should have three purposes: it should provide all who want to learn with access to available resources at any time in their lives; empower all who want to share what they know to find those who want to learn it from them; and, finally, furnish all who want to present an issue to the public with the opportunity to make their challenge known.....Learners should not be forced to submit to an obligatory curriculum, or to discrimination based on whether they possess a certificate or a diploma. (Illich, 1970 p.75)

In addition to, and as a result of self-education, questioning and thinking critically, appeared in various ways throughout the transcripts. This process of questioning may happen first or last, simultaneously or on rare occasions. Each of the coresearchers seems to be in a continual state of questioning the way things are. Roger reflects on the words "environment" and "environmentalist" and what they have come to mean in our culture. "I think the word now has become watered down to the point that it's somewhat ambiguous and it's like a lot of words, it's maybe emotional, it has a lot of emotional overtones or it elicits certain standard or stereotyped images and ideas. An environmentalist, well what's that? It's somebody with a beard who's anti-establishment, whatever and there's almost some truth in that because, not truth in the stereotype, but truth in the perception." (Roger 502-507) Myron uses the analogy of shearing a sheep to illustrate some of his questions and opinions. "You don't starve to death because things won't grow. You starve to death because of politics, the way things run. So you expect to live a certain lifestyle and the money has to come from somewhere. You can shear a sheep many times but you can only skin it once. People are getting to the point that they want to skin the sheep, that they're not getting enough by shearing it. But they don't seem to know enough to realize that the sheep dies when you skin it." (Myron 123-128) Myron questions everything from the forestry industry, to efficiency, to food, to human nature. "It's like people and paper. Maybe every 8 and half x 11 inch sheet of paper should cost 10 cents, and 7 cents of that should actually go back to make sure the forest survives. But people aren't willing to pay. They want to pay half a cent or pay \$11 for 500 sheets or whatever that turns out to be. The paper mills can still get more and more efficient and sell you cheaper and cheaper paper but efficiency the brunt of the efficiency is taken by the environment. We are more and more capable of processing stuff that there is already enough of, but they're not capable of replenishing it. So eventually it'll all be shorn clean and when you go back you'll find you've killed the sheep. There are certain ecological concerns that are not readily apparent and think that the book, For want of a dinner - that was really an eye opener in that regard. When you contemplate, you know, you've got chicken with rice and you've got a salad to go with it, and you have ice cream as dessert. Well that type of meal is an unbelievable

ecological disaster!! Just unbelievable, I mean you don't fathom what's going on behind all of this. The fact that you're here sitting in a non-rice growing country and how that rice and all the problems that have resulted from man meddling in what already existed and the appropriateness of it. We should never be eating rice here we should be eating whatever can grow here, not rice. The transport of all that stuff, the industry that's involved. And the approach has always been that if someone can bring it out cheaper they're going to sell more of it. And the person who can't bring it out cheaper is going to fall by the wayside and it's sort of a it's like the snake eating itself, you end up consuming yourself. (laughs) You're not like, setting up something where everything is going to start replenishing itself, or that sort of thing. It's just going in the direction where pretty soon it'll all be mined away and there's nothing left and that's the direction it's going- human nature being what it is." (Myron 458-483) Cougar and Emma engage in a process of questioning large issues and connecting them to local issues. For example looking critically at the way we have set up our urban communities to encourage the use of cars. "I believe strongly that that it's not so much how we get around, not which vehicle we use it's more the design of the city itself. And designing the city, the goal should be to design the city so that we live and work and play and shop all within walking distance of where we live." (Cougar 866-869) They question transportation, design of cities and then connect that to multinational corporations and global ecological issues. "I guess I've been thinking about cars in a deep way since, for maybe twenty years and for me anyways, I see a lot, a sort of a convergence of a lot of our ecological and social problems that a lot of them when you follow them through they end up at the doorstep, even at the exhaust pipe of the automobile. And they're really, from a lot of different directions I mean I see the car as the centerpiece, as the icon of our unecological lifestyle and if we could really address that that issue I think we'd make a huge leap a real big change in how our society relates to ecology. I guess from a sort of political perspective I think a lot of people recognize the damage that multinational companies are causing to you know to different cultures, to the environment, to the sustainability of the earth. And I think people get that on some level. They understand that the big companies are really just in it for the money. Well, if you look at the list of the big companies they're basically car and oil companies, the top ten, probably 8 out of 10 of them are car or oil companies- Exxon, Standard Oil, Ford, GM, Mitsubishi, and so forth" (Cougar/Emma 615-629)

Many of the coresearchers criticized consumerism and by questioning the dominant messages in our society develop a resistance to 'buy'. "I think we can slowly work our way toward a simpler life it's just we have to. Basically change our attitude and our way of

thinking first. 'Cause we've been brought up in a society where we're told to consume. And we've all been brought up to go to school and do what we're told. Myself personally I find out that that's not all true. So I'm basically I guess you could say reprogramming myself." (Fred/Dave 8-13) "Really turning off that real consumerist hype that's constantly, through the media forever being cranked up higher and higher to keep buying, keep buying. When you turn on the T.V. it's telling you to buy this stuff and when you read the paper and the magazines and all the media are telling you to buy stuff and here's a good deal and buy it. And the advertising is just getting more and more aggressive and more and more... it's everywhere. You know you can't get away from it and advertisers are now putting ads on postage stamps. You know they're talking about ads on eggs and in the air, in the sky the size of a moon there will be logos, if these companies are successful in their bids. Logos the size of the moon of IBM and CocaCola so. You know we're constantly being bombarded with this message to **buy**, spend money, **buy**, it's good for the economy, **buy** it's good for your ego, your feelings of self worth you've gotta go out and buy stuff. And I guess over the years I've really tried to to as much as possible to tune that stuff out and to not buy. And to consume as little as I can." (Cougar 953-967) Another question connects what we buy to other bigger issues. "Everything that you want to buy you not only question where it was made and how it was made, on whose backs it was made, as far as buying produce at least then you look at at what kind of waste you're buying too." (Paula 196-199) "Cougar: It's sad how much money and time and resources are wasted - you can see it on the other end because at the second hand store there's so much clothing that obviously wasn't really used very much. And we ship a massive amount of our second hand clothing to the developing world and they end up wearing our t-shirts and pants and then that ends up destroying their local indigenous clothing manufacturing industry so , there are a lot of sort of broader even global ecological and social problems related to how we how we buy clothes. It's fascinating. Emma: The start of that loop is most of those fashion designed clothes come from the third world to begin with." (Cougar/Emma 584-594)

Some coresearchers asked why people buy? "We get caught up in buying things to make us feel good and don't realize, I think that we can't support, the globe can't support that kind of uh production and devastation." (Paula 279-281)

Another way to question is recognizing that sometimes we need to ask different questions in order to see things in a different way and to come up with solutions to problems. "I mean the questions I would ask would be, How can we build a community that's in

harmony with the environment and that's sustainable and really depending on what questions you ask you get very different answers because that's your perspective, that you're bringing, you're bringing to the whole exercise. You know first of all one question I would ask is you know, where does the sun shine, where's south, how can we take advantage of that solar energy for heating buildings How can we design buildings that don't need furnaces, how can we design buildings that are cool in the summer without airconditioning. How can we design a community that virtually uses no fossil fuels? How can we design a community that gets its own food right from the ground. A community where the sewage that gets flushed down the low flush toilets that goes to a small sewage treatment plant that then goes irrigate food crops that grow within the community. How can we build a place where seniors and kids can live together and have places to play together and local, little bit of commerce and people working in their neighborhood? It seems to me that there's a real opportunity to build a sustainable, urban community a mile and a half from downtown that would work well from an ecological perspective that I would say would be less expensive for people to live in and where actually the quality of life would be way higher than your traditional community. That to me would be a real vision and real exciting but Emma and I and some others tried to articulate that and it was almost as if we were speaking a different language, like it was Greek to most people." (Cougar/Emma 163-184) Cougar is continually questioning how we deal with our waste and thinking laterally, in new ways. "I think that if reasonable people, concerned about the environment sat down and started with a clean piece of paper and said how are we gonna handle sewage or how are we gonna handle garbage? We'd come up with totally different systems and totally different avenues." (Cougar 998-1001) In the process of questioning the way things are set up in communities Cougar also explores alternatives, that on first glance seem wacky, but he may be on to something after all. "I'm now thinking along the lines of peeing on your compost bin on the compost is good for the compost supposedly. And shitting, I'm not really sure what to do about that. (laughs) I'm now thinking that, maybe the composting worms, are the way to go. A four year old friend, suggested that to me last week and I've been thinking about that. Composting worms that are used for composting kitchen scraps, are actually manure worms, that's where they come from, the red wiggler worms. And maybe there's some way to develop a home worm shit toilet. (laughs) Yeah. The concept is so bizarre that I think it might actually work! You'd have your toilet and it could look like your traditional toilet and the you'd have a drawer underneath and you'd shit in there and throw some you know wood chips, shavings or something and then, and then what would you do? Maybe you'd put a lid on it and put it

aside, you'd end up with...it'd probably take a lot of space, you'd have all these containers...." (Cougar 1010-1023)

Paula sees questioning as an integral part of living. "Some of the things I think about are part of a vision of questioning, questioning authority, questioning products, questioning information. And being more aware of what it took to produce something that you're now consuming, what kind of labour and fuel and environmental degradation. That I see as something that would be nice for a lot of people to take into consideration. The other thing is changing our value system to enjoying things that are not, that are not bought, that are not products. The ultimate would be to be able to enjoy beautiful, something that is beautiful, whether it's scenery or music or a painting, the arts, or people's history, rather than things that are material and superficial...." (Paula 378-382)

The idea of questioning can be an uncomfortable but vital process. Questioning doesn't always come up with questions that we like. Should I drive my car? What if I like Hollywood movies? What about tea and coffee and where it comes from, what chemicals were sprayed on it, who picked it, how much non-renewable energy did it take to get here, is it healthy for my body, for my world?....

Action

"In one's own hands..." refers to putting the caring, learning, thinking and questioning into action - to coming to terms with the inherent paradoxes and dialectics of living. "Once our personal connection to what is wrong becomes clear, then we have to choose: we can go on as before, recognizing our dishonesty and living with it the best we can; or we can begin the effort to change the way we think and live" (Berry, 1977 p.19) The reality is, that caring and questioning are not enough. This inner process within our hearts and heads must be translated into our hands, into action. This is an outer process. From the coresearchers' stories one can see how action can take place within lives on an everyday basis. In addition to the way they live, the coresearchers have a variety of thoughts and opinions concerning the importance of putting thought into practice.

One way that the coresearchers take action is through activism and education.

"I also use my office for my volunteer work which is, I spend more time on the volunteer work than on the work that I get paid for and that's mainly with Friends of the Environment Association. My office is sort of a meeting point and contact point. If we're

involved in litigation or something then I'm the contact person." (Paula 75-79) Cougar and Emma attempt to get people questioning cars and the resulting interconnections. Cougar: "I guess that's been the challenge for me as an activist over the years try to find ways to talk about it that people don't turn off and and you know just not able to hear it. I think objectively the implications of our, as a society, heavy reliance on the automobile are profound. You know the war in the Gulf just to take one sort of recent example. Global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, those have very real connections to our reliance on the automobile. Emma: Oil spills. Cougar: Oil spills, the Valdez oil spill. But you know everybody knows about the Valdez oil spill but most people don't know that there is the equivalent of eight Valdez spills going into the water in Canada, from people who change their own oil in their backyards. You know, that's a whole hell of a lot of oil and when oil gets in into the water table, it's a major problem of pollution. You know all the, I guess health care costs of the accidents of drunk driving, speeding." (Cougar/Emma 840-854) Cougar and Emma focus on educating in a non-threatening way, by being an example in driving as little as possible and in collecting a wide array of information. Stop educates people through her Raging Grannies singing and in another way; "I see what I do as trying to convince people to watch what they buy and I have a display that I take around to the places and have a talk that I give about watching what you buy as far as packaging goes and watching what you buy as far a nutrition goes because it's linked. Most of the things that we buy that are nutritionally deficient are highly packaged, over packaged." (Stop 397-401)

Often people become aware of problems and see only the pessimism or negative side of things. This difficulty is expressed by Dave; "Let's get people doing things. Stop complaining saying, 'That's bad stop it.' But say look we've got something over here we can do and it's responsible to the environment and it's possible to get a job and you can still have a decent lifestyle. So, I'd like to see more people getting active and doing these things and talking less and doing more." (Dave 801-805) Jerry Mander expresses this same dilemma in response to the reaction from people that he was pessimistic.

I am personally not pessimistic. My feeling has always been that describing the reality of a problem will encourage activism, not withdrawal. In any case, that is my wish. If I didn't believe that the present negative trends could be reversed, I probably would not have put so much effort into writing about them. But as my late partner in the advertising business, Howard Gossage, used to say, "It's not enough to make people feel bad; you've also got to offer something they can do." (Mander, 1991 p.393)

The coresearchers describe the reality of problems and then offer something to do, alternatives, action to take. Stop sees this very clearly "...it's easy to find a cause that, you just say look this is wrong and you can't keep on doing these kinds of things. And so there's always, a cause that you can get involved in." (Stop 128-131) The cause may have to do with food; "I'm really interested on a city wide scale and certainly more in my own life to figure out ways to build way more root cellars and other things. You know this is root crop country. We have the best soil around, certainly in Canada and possibly in the world, for growing root crops, it's phenomenal soil and the climate's just right for it. Now for us to be importing carrots from California is just plain ridiculous. It's bad for our local farming, and it's bad for the environment. It doesn't make sense. Now how could we as a city be self sufficient in carrots? We'd have to build a bunch of root cellars and what it would take is some of the heavy equipment that's going off building roads and highway interchanges instead of doing that, digging some holes and getting a good design for root cellars and being able to store and preserve those carrots and potatoes and you know throughout the year. It's not really high tech stuff, but it would be really valuable in terms of becoming more ecological and self-sufficient." (Cougar 1090-1103) "I'm upset at the fact that our food all comes from California except for a few weeks in the summertime. Most of the food, even in the summertime you buy food that comes from California or Mexico. And that bothers me 'cause it seems that uh in a province that gets it's name from providing food for the world, which is what Alberta does, we don't even provide food for our own people that live here. And I think that the emphasis should be on buying more cabbage, turnips, those kinds of things, in the wintertime which we could provide for all Albertans in Alberta." (Stop 20-27) "...it seems to me that we'd be much better off to provide as much food as we can locally and if we have to have lettuce in the wintertime then we should try to find ways of getting it closer to home than we now do." (Stop 43-47) Action may have to do with being politically active or protesting; "But I think if we really made representation to our Members of Parliament it would be a fairly simple thing to change the law. And after all that's what I think participatory democracy is. It's not going to the polls once every four years and electing someone to do what they want during the next four years. It's their responsibility once they're elected to listen to what people have to say. In fact I just got, put that by my phone, a leaflet from my MP saying fill out this survey and send it back to me. And I intend to." (Stop 309-315) "...really all the packaging that goes on nowadays is for the manufacturers' convenience, not for the consumer. And I think that the consumer should have the chance to say no we want and need goods that are produced close to home so that we don't have to buy all this heavily packaged stuff." (Stop 363-366) It may involve challenging old structures and creating

new ones. Fred refers to his vision of a Green Building code. "I'd like to carry on and promote it in an urban setting too. Maybe a subdivision with re-zoning and changing the planning acts so they can accept a waterless toilet. Right now you can't do that. Build a house with a waterless toilet and the city won't approve it yet but provincially the government does. So there's a tremendous amount of work to get political approval to promote this. So it's not just the soft technology or the enthusiasm in the way here. Carmen: Yeah technology's the least of our problems. Fred: It's the structural resistance to sustainable living, that's the problem." (Fred 783-791)

An action might be tuning out the television to deprogram yourself and participating in more active leisure as Fred describes; "I'm having difficulty as it is deprogramming what I've been led to believe for years and years and years. In my upbringing in this culture, materialistic culture and so to make it easier to deprogram I uh. My T.V. broke down seven years ago so I threw it away (laughs). No T.V. I do have a VCR but don't use it that often. I'm really enjoying it. I find it's more productive. It's part of this wholistic eco-living, means reading more, means being more active. To me it seems that the consumptive culture is passive. Watch T.V, watch the hockey game, watch the baseball game, you watch a sitcom, you know you watch people do things for recreation and it's a very kind of almost to me it seems deadly. I just get depressed watching T.V. for an hour." (Fred 187-197) Taking action may be about doing less and setting priorities. "And we've gotta think about doing less, I think. You know in this society we basically break our backs to make a living for ourselves, to have our dreams come true. And we spend so much time working and slaving ourselves away, making ourselves unhealthy, that we don't have time, many people, for their dreams... So I think it's not how many things we want to accomplish, it's I think we should say we want to accomplish a few less things in our life." (Dave 322-332) One way that Myron acts is by earning very little money. "I think that for every dollar you earn there must be a tab, a pollution tab or a negative environmental impact that when you have to earn a living and big amounts of money come in your direction then big amounts of pollution are your responsibility." (Myron 385-388) The coresearchers, by earning very little money, participate in the local economy as well as in what is sometimes called the underground economy. Wendell Berry advocates questioning the idea of global economics, and mass production and he advocates actions that start on a personal and local community level.

We need local revision of our methods of land use and production. We need to study and work together to reduce scale, reduce overhead, reduce industrial dependencies; we need to market and process local products locally; we need to bring local economies into harmony with local ecosystems so that we can live and work with pleasure in the same places indefinitely; we need to substitute ourselves, our neighborhoods, our local resources, for expensive imported goods and services; we need to increase cooperation among all local economic entities; households, farms, factories, banks, consumers, and suppliers. If we are serious about reducing government and the burdens of government, then we need to do so by returning economic self-determination to the people....I acknowledge that to advance such reforms is to advocate a kind of secession-not a secession of armed violence but a quiet secession by which people find the practical means and the strength of spirit to remove themselves from an economy that is exploiting them and destroying their homeland. (Berry, 1992 p.17-18)

Cougar reflects on the resistance to change and action on a larger scale beginning with dandelions. "You know why in the world we spend so much time and effort and chemicals and cause health damage undoubtedly from all this 2-4D and Killex that's being sprayed around. It's just plain ridiculous. I guess my belief now is that a lot of these changes are sort of towards a more ecological community will come when there's an awareness. Really, it's an ongoing education talking to people, people worrying, curious, finding out and at the moment when enough people in Edmonton say we're not gonna spray for dandelions anymore (snaps fingers) the change happens just like that. I mean it's not a technological barrier, or a political barrier really it's just an awareness barrier. And I guess the same could be said about bicycling that there's no reason why we couldn't have ten times more trips by bicycle in Edmonton tomorrow. It's just people have to recognize that there's a need for it and that they wanna be doing it and a lot of people do wanna ride their bikes but you know it means articulating that desire and applying enough pressure. Political pressure. There is a bit of a political barrier, and will bring about the change." (Cougar 1138-1153)

One of the most powerful things that one can do is to be an example. This idea will be explored further in the next chapter, but Paula summarizes the idea very well. "I guess that if you expect someone else to make changes then you have to feel pretty secure about the sort of life you're living to ask them to make any move in your direction. As far as,... environmental issues I think it makes a big difference. That if you can demonstrate that you're trying not to be an over-consumer and live fairly gently and not use pesticides and not go overboard in a number of areas, you feel that maybe you have a better position to consider the sort of things that they're doing. And a number of people have told me that they're not interested in living this lifestyle and I don't think that I'm really asking them to, but just that, you can see that some people are not, living in the mainstream. Like I'm not and it gives, the people that you're talking to a different perspective, to see what you're

doing and to know that not everybody is the same or has the same desires." (Paula 162-175)

The interacting process of caring, questioning and acting may occur at different discrete times, or may occur simultaneously. Definitely it is not a linear, but a cyclical process.

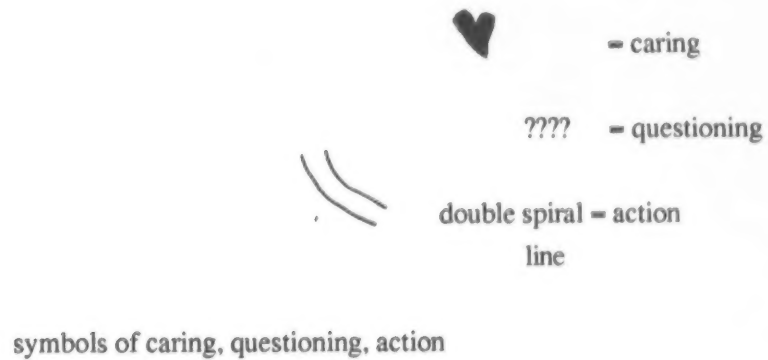


Figure 5: Caring, Questioning, Action.

Levels

David W. Orr writes about how change "...requires a rejuvenation of civic culture and the rise of an ecologically literate and ecologically competent citizenry who understand global issues, but who also know how to live well in their places." (Orr, 1992 p.1) In the previous section on the inner/outer process of caring, questioning and action I could see that that process was occurring on a number of levels. Understanding global issues and living well in their places are two levels that have a great deal of distance between them but are interconnected. This brings us back to the image of the spider web and it's delicate but powerful strands connecting distant points. There is an infinite variety of points, intersections, opposites, paradoxes, tensions and dialectics. From the experiences of the coresearchers and the varied reading that I have done, I see four levels at which, caring, questioning and action take place.

Individual: This would be on the level of your own personal actions and day to day living. One's partner and/or family would be included on this level.

Local: This would be on the level of your immediate community; neighbors, friends and would likely include a city, municipal or county level of government. Cougar gives an example of this; "So the sewage one I think is really, interesting on a city wide scale and also on a personal scale." (Cougar 1087)

Bioregional: Bioregions are areas that are defined by the presence of all living things within that area rather than only human life or structures. An example of a bioregion that is fairly limited might be a particular section of forest or grassland. Another way to define a bioregion is by using a watershed as the defining feature. A very large bioregion might be the Canadian Shield- with smaller regions within it. Needless to say bioregions ignore artificial human boundaries such as county lines, provinces and countries. Caring, questioning and acting may occur in one bioregion or across several.

Global: This level is the earth and it's biosphere with human and other living beings and ecosystems being considered.

Another level that may be important in the future is that of galaxys. At the moment humans are rapidly approaching the point where our actions could have significant effects on regions outside our own planet.

This idea of the interconnectedness of levels and the interconnectedness of everything makes it possible to see problems, issues or challenges in smaller pieces so that they become easier to care about, think about and to act upon. The idea of levels enables one to care, question and act upon an issue at a variety of levels whether that is individual, local, bioregional or global or a combination. Emma is a good example of this. She speaks about wanting to work for change on a long term basis. "For the longer term goal of dealing with the crisis that we're going through right now and trying to effect change at the local and global level." (Emma 254-256) The other interesting aspect of this idea of levels is that one may enter the process at any level. For example Myron and Donna entered the process at the individual level as a function of trying to get by on very little money. Three of the women, Stop, Paula and Donna all mention the role of the global anti-nuclear/peace movement as being one way in which they increased their awareness or their involvement. Often the process of living ecologically begins quietly and on a variety of levels. Caring may occur on one level, questioning at others and action still at other levels depending on the individual.

It may be useful to illustrate this with an example.

Issue: clear cut logging of the northern boreal forest in Alberta.

Individual: This issue may affect an individual in these ways:

- you can see a clearcut from your home
- water quality is affected
- logging trucks driving by creating noise, pollution and wrecking the road
- soil erosion
- industry i.e. pulp mill that creates toxic waste

Local:

- all of the above
- local zoning laws
- change in members of the community - some moving away others moving in
- conflict with other members of the community that see the issue differently

Bioregional

- all of the above
- how this affects the whole watershed
- how toxic wastes affect people and other living things downstream
- loss of habitat for wildlife

Global

- all of the above

- how does this connect with global pollution, toxins, land fill problems
- global deforestation
- global warming and air quality

It is possible and likely that an individual is worried about any one or more of these issues at one or more levels. If one attempts to care, question and act on all levels at once then the issues and problems become overwhelming and mind paralyzing. The issues at all levels interconnect but it is possible to focus on a smaller piece of an issue; keeping in mind the wider connections in order to feel that it is possible to care, question and then most importantly, act.

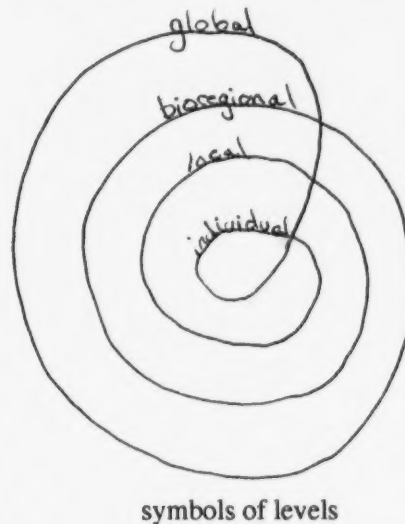


Figure 6: Levels

CHAPTER IV

CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE WEB

The anchor points for a spider's web occur in its immediate surroundings. It may be the gap between two trees or a hollow in a clump of grass or it might be in the corner of a room. The purpose for the web is so that the spider can capture insects to eat. This is a symbiotic process that connects the spider to what humans might call the food chain. Get rid of all the spiders and a vital connection in the web on the earth would be broken. Part of living ecologically is to see ourselves as part of the many interconnections rather than separate. Thus the goal of living ecologically is in transforming our relationships to others; others being all other living things on the earth. This is a huge concept with many pitfalls along the way. Keep in mind the image of an interdependent community of living things that are connected by an invisible web.

Transforming Relationship To Others

"The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart and head and hands and then work outward from there." (Robert Pirsig) Caring, questioning and action; what is the goal of all of that? Where are we going? "To improve the world" To improve the world in what way? It certainly won't be improved by creating more things, more products, more technology and global economy. But it will be improved in imagining, creating, living and transforming our relationship to others. Others being all living beings, creatures and systems on the earth. Why is a transformed relationship to others important? Wendell Berry eloquently answers this question.

We and our country create one another; that our land passes in and out of our bodies, just as our bodies pass in and out of our land; that as we and our land are part of one another, so all who are living as neighbours here, human and plant and animal, are part of one another, and so cannot possibly flourish alone; that, therefore, our culture must be our response to our place, our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other. (Berry 1977 p.22)

Humans have perfected going in and out of the land, but what about land going in and out of our bodies? How can this happen when our food, our entertainment, our clothes, even in some cases, our water, comes from somewhere else? All things are interconnected in culture and in nature. "Humans and nature construct one another." (Wilson 1991 p.14) We construct our lives and our lives construct us. We construct our places and our places construct us. We can not transform our relationship to nature without transforming our culture. We need to cooperate with each other and with nature. There are several schools of thought, philosophies, or bodies of theory that provide differing visions, imaginings, thoughts, of a transformed relationship to others. The theoretical writing in the areas of deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism and bioregionalism, addresses many issues concerning humans and our interactions with each other and with the natural world. Theoretical ideas combined with the views and practices of the coresearchers to continually form my own understandings. I wish to briefly explore these philosophies in order to better understand different points of view of a transformed relationship to others.

Social Ecology

Social ecology is based primarily on the extensive writings of Murray Bookchin, an independent scholar in Vermont. His ideas have been expanded upon by other writers, and used in other fields, but he is still the 'main mind' behind social ecology. The central

premise of social ecology is that, "...all our notions of dominating nature stem from the very real domination of human by human." (Bookchin, 1989 p.44) and that ecological problems have their source in social problems. Bookchin examines the course of history from the perspective of dialectical naturalism, to determine patterns of hierarchy and domination and to determine past solutions, particularly stemming from anarchist utopias, that may be relevant in the present and future. Bookchin sees humans as part of nature and human society as an extension of evolution from nature. The major critiques of society by social ecology are a critique of capitalism, institutions, and hierarchy. Bookchin sees the complete remaking and restructuring of society, based along ecological lines, as the solution to ecological and social problems. For Bookchin, the remaking of society must be based on a "...fundamental libertarian precept; every normal human being is competent to manage the affairs of society and more specifically the community in which he or she is a member." (Bookchin, 1989 p.174) The idea of unity in diversity is central to the philosophy of social ecology. Bookchin sees solutions as beginning in the following way; "...capitalism has to be replaced by an ecological society based on non-hierarchical relationships, decentralized communities, eco-technologies, like solar power, organic agriculture, and humanly scaled industries- in short, by face to face democratic forms of settlement economically and structurally tailored to the ecosystems in which they were located." (Bookchin, 1989 p.155)

Deep Ecology

The philosophy of deep ecology was started by Arne Naess in Norway and his ideas have provided the basis for deep ecology in the rest of the developed world. The basic premise of deep ecology is the intrinsic worth of the non-human world independent of its value to humans. Diversity and complexity are valued and should not be diminished except for vital human needs. The way to accomplish these goals, according to Devall, is through voluntary simplicity. He defines this as; "Voluntary simplicity is not self denial but a more compassionate approach to living and consideration for the vital needs of other creatures." (1988 p.84) The major deep ecology critiques of society are firstly, increasing standard of living without emphasis on quality of life. Anti-consumerism is part of the critique of ever increasing standard of living for a few of the humans on the earth. (Devall, 1988 p.83) The second critique is that humans impact and technology jeopardize the needs of other species. The third point is that "...the engagement of nature is reduced in favour of engagement in the technology." (Naess, 1989 p.103) "Practicing deep ecology lifestyles is a process of rediscovering what is important and meaningful in our lives." (Devall, 1988

p.99) "We can start, for example, in our own houses and neighbourhoods." (Devall, 1988 p.97)

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a diverse area and Greta Gaard, in the first chapter of the anthology that she edited, explains it far better than I can;

Ecofeminism is a theory that has evolved from various fields of feminist inquiry and activism: peace movements, labour movements, women's health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental, and animal liberation movements. Drawing on the insights of ecology, feminism, and socialism, ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature. Ecofeminism calls for an end to all oppressions, arguing that no attempt to liberate women (or any other oppressed group) will be successful without an equal attempt to liberate nature. (Gaard, 1993 p.1)

Unlike social ecology and deep ecology there are no "main thinkers" behind ecofeminism. This is a strength as Vance, sums up the situation within ecofeminist writing, saying that we must, "...accept a degree of uncertainty and disagreement...a process that respects difference and encourages discussion and that embraces a range of praxis....There can be no single set of answers." (1993 p.135) Kheel (1993 p.243) sees this as a process of weaving a tapestry to provide a picture of the world in which we live and to create images for the future. Issues and ideas are viewed from infinite vantage points. The other strength of ecofeminism is that it has roots both in academia and in the grassroots thinking of women. Heller, puts forward the idea that solutions must begin in an authentic love of nature and of ourselves. "Love of nature emerges from knowledge of oppression and potential liberation within our eco-communities. We learn this love by fighting all forms of social oppression, and by expressing our potential for cooperation and creative enhancement of nature." (Heller, 1993 p.234)

Bioregionalism

Bioregionalism is similar to ecofeminism in that there is no 'main mind'. The strength in bioregionalism is that it has tried to combine ideas from social ecology, deep ecology and ecofeminism and in doing so create a way to practice these philosophies. It is described as "...more than a set of ideas, however, bioregionalism is a movement as well." (Andruss et al. 1990 p.2) Judith Plant expresses the central idea within bioregionalism; "Remembering and reclaiming the ways of our species where people and place are delicately interwoven in a web of life-human community finding its particular place within the living and dying that marks the interdependence of life in an integrated ecosystem. This is the pattern of

existence that bioregionalism explores." (Plant, 1990 p.ix) In examining the roots of the word bioregionalism we can see what it is; "Bio means all of life...regional...means within a physical or geographic boundary...and ism is the human part; where we study how we relate with and live as part of the bioregion." (Andruss et al. 1990 p.4) Within bioregionalism there are ideas and practices around forming small scale, self-governed community, alternative economics, ecological restoration, redefining boundaries according to "bio-features" rather than human borders, ideas from feminism which address issues of hierarchy and domination with humans and other species. Bioregionalism is eclectic and vital.

I see three aspects to the roles or positions that these thoughts or philosophies play in the process of living ecologically. The first is the role played by academics and writers that engage in debate around what they see as vital disagreements between for example deep ecology and social ecology. The second position is that of grassroots individuals and communities attempting to put these philosophies into practice. These two positions are interconnected in a variety of ways. One interesting way is that the debates that occur within the literature between philosophies have very little relevance when it comes to putting them into practice. In the practical end of the spectrum the end results look very much the same but may be undertaken for differing reasons. For example the ideas within social ecology, deep ecology, ecofeminism and bioregionalism all at some point deal with the issue of food. The end result may be that people attempting to put these ideas into practice may all grow much of their own food or obtain it locally. From a social ecology viewpoint this may be done for social justice reasons - to oppose the use of migrant workers to grow food in California. From a deep ecology viewpoint this may be done in order to interfere less with the habitat of other species all of which have inherent worth. From an ecofeminism point of view it may be done to empower women in the growing and providing of their own food from outside a patriarchal system. From a bioregional point of view growing one's own food may be to reduce the use of non-renewable resources in order to transport food from far away places. There is much overlap within each of these actions and philosophies. My purpose in my conversations with the coresearchers was not to label them as deep ecologists, social ecologists, ecofeminists, or bioregionalists. Without talking with them in great depth about their specific philosophies it would seem to me that they choose alternatives or suggestions or ideas from any of the philosophies that make sense to them in their place and their own life.

How do we move from where we are now, the many ways that people are living at present-toward a vision of an ecological society? I see the third role of the philosophies and theories related to ecological living as serving as a vision for which direction to head in- as a stimulus for our imaginations. Imagination is a process that is similar to caring and questioning and takes place in the heart and the head.

We need to put our imaginations to work to create a vision of a new relationship with nature. One where nature is not separate, not dominated, neither romanticized or seen as a resource but once again seen as our home. To heal this alienation, ecological theory must invite people to come to terms with their distinctive place and role in natural evolution. To accomplish this, ecological theories must help people to recognize and express the human potential for sociability and cooperation both within society and with nature. We need to uncover our ability to be humans-in-nature and humans-as-nature in a new, creative, and liberatory way. (Heller, 1993 p.227)

We desperately need a new vision of how to live in and alongside the natural world. This new vision will require imagination and creativity. "We must first recognize that creativity is a human resource, the gift of life to the human species. It is a unique force in the universe." (Barron, 1988 p.97) The reason that we are falsely perceived as separate from nature is mostly due to human creativity, ingenuity and imagination-look at the immense amount of technology that we have and how amazingly creative it is. But, we also need to look at how technology changes our relationships, to each other, and to the other living things on the planet. Our relationships to each other are impacted by technologies such as modern communication devices or by separating each person on their way to work in their own glass, plastic and metal bubble on four wheels or by assembly line employment. Ursula Franklin critiques prescriptive technologies, which she defines as those technologies that function through specialization by process, the breaking down of a complete task into smaller, meaningless, separate steps.

Where prescriptive technologies are structured to perform social transactions, these transactions will be organized or reorganized according to the logic of technology, the logic of production. Thus, as more and more of daily life in the real world of technology is conducted via prescriptive technologies, the logic of technology begins to overpower and displace other types of social logic, such as the logic of compassion, or the logic of obligation, the logic of ecological survival or the logic of linkages into nature. (Franklin, 1990 p.95)

Technology can separate us from nature in a variety of small ways and more drastic ways. This becomes apparent in a supermarket. There is very little indication from the temperature or from the available food as to the season. Fresh vegetables are available year round regardless of whether there is snow on the ground outside. There is little sense of climate because the inside temperature is warm in winter, cool in summer, all of which are

due to technological innovations. It becomes possible to;

...construct an environment that is warm in the winter, cool in the summer - equilibrating temperature and humidity to create an environment that does not reflect nature. Nature is then the outside for "us" who are in an internal cocoon. Indeed, technology does allow us to design nature out of much of our lives. This, however, may be quite stupid. People are part of nature whether they like it or not. (Franklin, 1990 p.87-88)

We need to use our creativity in constructive ways. "...a society that can develop the one-handed squeeze tube must have the brainpower to scale down while sustaining dignified and decent ways of life." (McKibben, 1992 p.119) Webster's Dictionary (1986) defines imagination as;

...an act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the imaginer (as though a synthesis of remembered elements of previous sensory experiences or ideas)

In order to be able to imagine and create new ways of interacting with nature we need sensory information. "Creativity is almost infinite. It involves every sense- sight, smell, hearing, feeling, taste, and even perhaps the extrasensory." (Torrance, 1988 p.43) One sphere of our lives where everyone of us has contact with nature is in the food we eat. Ferenc Mate talks about the influences that pesticides, chemical fertilizers and genetic engineering have had on our food. Many fruits and vegetables are now grown for looks rather than taste or nutrition.

Some would shrug at this and say 'So what's a little pesticide? And what if things don't taste as good as they could?' But it's not as simple as that. The flavour of the greens and fruits we eat is not merely an indulgent luxury. It is just as connected to our lives and the world around us as the air we breathe or the water we drink. If we do not learn about, if we are not exposed to, the hundreds of inimitable flavours our fruits and vegetables can give us, then we will never be able to learn to love them. We will happily accept manufactured half-foods of horrendous smells, colours and flavours simply because they're more memorable than the flavourless, insipid fruits and greens available to us. Then we will accept insipidness as a part of Nature. And if we have never seen or smelled the clear blue sky of a winter prairie or a summer mountain, then we will unquestioningly accept our filthy city air. If we don't know the thrill of the forest, then we will learn to accept our concrete cities. If we don't know how to be amazed by Nature, we will not learn to love her. That is why we should fight tooth and nail for the tomato, the tomato full of flavour, full of sun. (Mate 1995 p.53)

Mate uses the example of the tomato, of our food, to illustrate one realm of sensory deprivation that occurs in our culture. This limits our "material" or our "fuel" for our imaginations and creativity thus making it difficult to see alternatives and a transformed relationship to nature. Nelson, discusses how Lame Deer, a Sioux elder, observes the sensory deprivation of our society. Nelson is referring particularly to sensory deprivation

from media images, but I would argue that her idea is pertinent to sensory deprivation as a result of the way that nature is experienced in our lives on an everyday basis.

I think white people are so afraid of the world they created that they don't want to see, feel, smell, or hear it. The feeling of rain and snow on your face, being numbed by an icy wind and thawing out before a smoky fire, coming out of a hot sweat bath and plunging into a cold stream, these things make you feel alive, but you don't want them anymore. Living in boxes which shut out the heat of the summer and the chill of the winter, living inside a body that no longer has scent, hearing the noise from the hi-fi instead of listening to the sounds of nature, watching some actor on TV having a make-believe experience when you no longer experience anything for yourself, eating food without taste- that's your way. It's no good. (Nelson, 1988 p.153)

Information and experiences that comes from something that is not a human artifact is important. It is this information that tells us that humans are not the only species on the planet.

In the world where we live most of the time, we are constantly in contact with the artifacts of man. (sic) I wake up in a room, I shower in a tub, I climb into a car and drive down a street lined with buildings, listening to people joke on the radio. Human society is where we're destined to spend most of our lives...But when there's little or no regular contact with the natural world, with the wildness found even in five-acre woodlots or on deserted waterfronts, then we start to feel that human society is all there is. (McKibben, 1992 p.230)

For many people, especially those in urban settings I would argue that most of their experiences with 'nature' are in urban parks, sometimes their own yards and distant "wilderness parks." Parks provide many opportunities for people, but there are other issues to think about as well. Falsified and domesticated nature is often what is offered in parks. It is true that not everyone will want to experience 'wilderness' but I do think that the majority of people who go to parks go to experience nature. On one level they get what they want; nature that they can see, but it's easy to get to. There are a myriad of facilities in parks, which provide;

...good visual access, and interpreters have also worked to enhance the "visibility" of nature by building roads and trails, observation towers, underwater viewing booths, boardwalks, blinds, and telescope platforms. Some parks use boats and aircraft to give visitors increased access to natural experiences. (Wilson, 1991 p.57)

So when people go to parks the majority of those that go to "experience" nature, go to facilities. These facilities as well as providing a certain kind of access, a very restricted kind of access, entertain visitors and fragment the landscape. Park visitors go to the observation tower, walk on a trail and read some interpretive signs, maybe learn a few new things about nature, and then go back to their house, the RV, the hotel or the tent in the campground. The problem is that it is difficult to see how all of these contrasting and

fragmented images fit together. Nowhere have the visitors seen how they fit into the picture of nature that is put before them. They bring their needs with them. How does this connect them to the place they are visiting? I would guess that it doesn't connect, but again fragments. In addition, in order to see nature they haven't had to change- except for having to control their urge to touch or pick things of course. It has all been facilitated for them. The brochures, the maps, the structures, trails and what park interpreters tell most visitors to visit, provide a prescribed experience. At the same time, the landscape is fragmented; the street, a nature trail over here, the RV park over there, the elk next to the railway track, the gift shop, the mall....

Nature tourism catalogued the natural world and created its own spaces out there among the trees, lakes, and rocks. It sold us nature-related products, and indeed it began to sell us natural space and experiences too.....It means that it's now more difficult to experience nature as a whole, as the total environment that for centuries and centuries has been our home- which is, after all, a very different kind of space from a "recreation resource." (Wilson, 1991 p.28)

When nature becomes a resource, a product, something that is less important than human nature or artifacts, then it becomes something separate from us. It is true that nature tourism, parks, and gardens have made it so that more people can enjoy natural areas, but I would argue that these entities obscure other vital issues that make it difficult to imagine a new relationship to nature.

The love of nature flourishes best in cultures with highly developed technologies, for nature is the one place we can both indulge our dreams of mastery over the earth and seek some kind of contact with the origins of life- an experience we don't usually allow urban settings to provide. (Wilson, 1991 p.25)

Parks epitomize the paradoxes that Wilson addresses. In parks we act out our dreams of mastery over the earth by protecting the park in the first place, by constraining our activities within the park, and by bringing the comforts of home with us in our RV's or backpacks. Or in the case of urban parks or gardens we strictly control our activities and what grows where; "...contemporary technology is saturated with models of domination, which in turn infect our relations with the natural world." (Wilson, 1991 p.171) We also seek contact with the origins of life. We visit waterfalls, we go on hikes, we walk along the river and pay for interpretive or recreation experiences. We escape urbanity to 'pristine' nature. Our mediated experiences in parks and gardens help to promote a love of nature that is a romanticized one. Therefore, it is necessary to think critically about the idea of "the love of nature."

The concept of romantic love has its origins in the twelfth-century poetry of French troubadours and has played a major role in Western ideas of love ever since. (Hunt, 1959) Like the noble lady of the twelfth-century, we place nature on a pedestal in the tradition of romantic love where, "the romantic themes of love through idealization, protection, and constraint pervade." (Heller, 1993 p.223) Themes of protection and constraint pervade experiences of nature. In parks people are constrained to follow certain rules, such as no picking of flowers, no feeding the bears, no hunting, stay off the grass, stay on the right side of the trail- the kind of rules that are designed to preserve nature in a place where a lot of people are visiting. But, these constraints and protections also contribute to idealized perceptions of nature. Romantic constraint, "...actually increases alienation within society and between society and nature." (Heller, 1993 p.227) Parks, with their romanticized image of pristine nature obscure the human domination of nature- the other side of protection and constraint. There aren't any signs telling you about fire repression, bear relocation, or that only strict laws prevent resource extraction in the wilderness park. In the city there aren't any signs that tell you how many dandelions were sprayed, how many bedding plants were transplanted, how many weeds were removed, the amount of chemical fertilizer that was used and the deadly mosquito control regime in place. There are no signs telling of the social pressure and City Bylaws to "control one's weeds" or to mow the lawn or shovel the snow or dig up your sunflowers and plant grass next to the alley.

'Wilderness' parks also obscure human domination of humans. It is not readily apparent that visitors to wilderness parks are primarily middle, and upper class, (Sax 1980 p.48) because there are no contrasts. Parks are little utopias where most everyone has sufficient money, because those who don't stayed at home or went elsewhere. People who work in services in parks can barely afford to live in parks and some do boring, meaningless work. In cities these hierarchies are less noticeable because in some ways there is more of a mixture. On the other hand, it is more likely that one will take the kids to the neighbourhood playground or park than drive across the city to an area of differing socio-economic class than one's own.

The way that our experiences with nature and with each other are presently constructed makes it difficult to imagine a world without domination and a new way of relating to nature. We are told by "environmentalists," governments, corporations and mass media that we are the dragon, ravaging the wilds of nature and that we must repress our desires, recycle our wastes, drive less and turn off the lights. We must do those '50 simple ways to save the earth.' We are implored to conserve and protect nature, to become the chivalrous

knight in shining armour, riding to the rescue of helpless Lady Nature. But as Heller argues so dramatically;

The knights can stop protecting nature and restraining their unchivalrous desires. The dragon no longer hovers over the romantic countryside flashing the generic name tag of 'technology' or 'humanity'. The dragon has finally taken off its mask. It wears the face of the capitalist draining the blood from the land and people of the "Third World". The dragon wears the fist of the batterer beating the last breath from the woman who dared to survive. The dragon wears the face of domination, the face of all institutions, ideologies, and individuals who strip people of their land, culture, passion, and self-determination. (Heller, 1994 p.239)

We need to question our ideas of nature and our structures of domination and power. The structures, organizations and institutions of society restrain us and restrict an unromanticised love of nature. "Love of nature is a process of becoming aware of and unlearning ideologies of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and able-ism so that we may cease to reduce our idea of nature to a dark, heterosexual, "beautiful" mother. (Heller, 1994 p.231) We need to create alternative ways of interacting with each other and with nature. We need to interact with nature as much on its own terms as we possibly can. We need to see the beautiful, awe inspiring, vicious, unpleasant and uncomfortable ways of the natural world, in our everyday lives, and when we go to parks. It is necessary to de-romanticize the natural world in order to develop transformed, radical ways of life for humans in and as nature. "An ecological society, free of all forms of domination, will express the human ability to participate fully in developing the richness and creativity of both the natural and the social world." (Heller, 1994 p.235)

In order to start this process of de-romanticizing and transforming, we need to be able to look at situations and issues from different vantage points as Nelson (1992, p.103) quotes Rose Goldsen (1978);

Political thought, no less than any other kind, takes place in imagination. In imagination we move around the social system so that we can peer at social reality first from this vantage point, then from that one, each time taking our bearings from the different slant...Social meanings emerge as we imagine the situation as it could otherwise have been (or be). The otherwise can exist only in imagination.

We are not discouraged from, but not encouraged to, look at nature and at ourselves from different vantage points. We are encouraged, within our currently constructed society, to participate within certain limits and certain structures that limit our imagination. Here is another way to think about this situation.

The cement box

There are people who tell me that the only way to change the system is from inside the system. What is traditionally referred to as 'the system' by activists and others, refers to the institutions and organizations of society. But, the true 'system' is the earth. The earth and its atmosphere are a closed system which we are all in, whether we like it or not. At this point in time it is not possible to get outside the system of the earth and its atmosphere. A colleague, in her first year of teaching in an academic position, wrote me a letter in which she talked about jackhammers and cement and those that were meant to pound away at institutions and organizations from the inside and those that were meant to pound away from the outside. This started me thinking...

Imagine society's institutions and organizations as a big cement box. When we participate in the traditional institutions and organizations of society we are inside this cement box. Some people stay inside the cement box and attempt change from within. These people are incredibly strong - I imagine them as freethinkers holding pick axes chipping away at the cement box. One can pound away at the cement box through many means - activism, lobbying, education etc. Some people within the cement box think the chippers are crazy. Some may join in chipping and attempt change. Still others see that things need to be changed but find the cement box too confining, too dusty. The cement box - organizations and institutions, have protection from pick axes. This protection comes in the form of inertia, indifference, socialization, laws, money. The organizations and institutions have jackhammers, but instead of working away at the cement, protect the cement by fragmenting landscape, communities, beating away at creativity, imagination and vision. Inside the cement box it's loud and sometimes hard to hear because we are being bombarded with messages from the institutions' and organizations' jackhammers as well as from the pickaxes. It can be hard to see through the dust to see what all the picks and jackhammers are accomplishing. Occasionally in standing by or attempting to help out we get hit by flying pieces of cement and debris. Sometimes we wonder if they chip and hammer just to be contrary or for the fun of it. It's hard sometimes to recognize jackhammers they are part of our everyday lives.

Some people, like the coresearchers, in some ways escape the cement box, not the system, the system of the earth is impossible to escape, but the cement box... Some of these people sit around in their underwear for six months deprogramming themselves. Sometimes these escapees use their picks on the outside of the cement box chipping away with

enthusiasm. But, from inside the cement box it's very hard to hear their message and it's a completely different way to see the world - from a different vantage point. Unless those picks on the inside pound away at the same point as those picks on the outside very little change occurs. It takes a lot of energy, work, perseverance and sometimes lifetimes to chip through cement. Once in awhile there are cracks and holes. I conjure up an image of someone poking their head out a hole and seeing outside the cement box for the first time. What does that person with their head sticking out of the cement box see? Some people sitting around in their underwear and some people chipping away at the box. "So?" says this person "It looks about the same out here as it does inside the box. Hmmm" So then they may come out to deprogram or to become chippers from the outside or they may continue on inside the cement box. But what if there was another kind of person on the outside, who after they had deprogrammed began creating? What if this kind of person used their pick to dig a garden, collected some seeds and some garden tools? Or what if they traded it in for some glue, nails and a hammer? The kind of tools to build instead of break down. What if this kind of person was creative and had imagination and vision? What if inside the cement box they dreamed and planned and prepared for a different world? What if when they escaped out a hole or a crack, deprogrammed, and then started to create their vision of a different world? What if they created alternative systems and organizations and institutions - ones that were in harmony with the earth and with people and allowed room for other visions and dreams? Well, then when someone stuck their head out of a hole in the cement box they could see that there are other ways to do things, other ways to live, other ways to learn, different ways than inside the cement box and then they could choose which one they would fit with best, or they could create their own.

Torrance, (1988 p.44) quotes Bartlett (1958) who "...employed the term 'adventurous thinking,' which he defined as 'getting away from the main track, breaking out of the mould, being open to experience, and permitting one thing to lead to another' (1958 p.103)" Imagination and creativity if fostered and nurtured can be radical. As a creative force,

...imagination is a truly revolutionary force, allowing us to conceive of alternatives. It is "radical" in the deepest sense of that word: transforming things at their root, opening up new possibilities, challenging and suspending (for the moment, or longer) the status quo. (Nelson, 1988 p.103)

Some people do fit into the cement box, usually they are male, have money and they probably own cement trucks (code for multinational corporations and centralized governments). Most of us do not really fit into the cement box but, it seems as if we are

socialized to believe that we fit. From birth we are moulded to take our place as "a contributing member of society." In other words we will become brick layers, cement workers, government bureaucrats - grow up to become encased in cement. We keep busy constructing walls between us and others, between us and nature -constructing walls of a house.

Mate wrote a whole chapter in his book A Reasonable Life, about present day houses. He does not see these buildings as homes but as boxes you spend your life toiling to pay for. Houses separate us from other people and from the natural world. Mate criticizes living rooms that are used only for watching television and challenges us to think critically about our living rooms;

How many days a year are our living rooms filled with passionate live conversation or bubbling laughter? When was the last time friends and neighbours drifted in and out and sat down for a glass of wine or a cup of coffee and discussed the ailments of the world, their lives or their zucchinis?...Are these not the things that make us truly human, enrich our lives, make our house a home? If our living room isn't for being together, if it's not for "living", then what is it for? Wouldn't we have been better off if we'd left the poor patch of ground below in peace, planted a little grove so we could look out at some green, some birds, some reality? (Mate, 1993 p.36)

It is not inevitable that we end up seeing our houses as home, rather than the earth as our home. We spend our lives working, maintaining traditional institutions and organizations, to get money to buy things, to be happy. Working away pretending on the outside that we fit but deep, deep, down, encased in cement, is a sneaking suspicion that something is not right. Within the cement box we are separated from nature and landscapes. Fragmented experiences make it difficult to think wholistically. Inside the cement box we have experiences with the tendency toward prescribed experiences, images with missing information, structures that reproduce models of domination, and a romantic love of nature. This does not encourage the imagining of new possibilities. The potential for new possibilities is obscured. We need lots of picks creating holes in the walls so that people can see out of the cement box.

Richardson writes about new genres of qualitative writing. One of these is called mixed genres where; "The scholar draws freely in his or her productions from literary, artistic and scientific genres, often breaking the boundaries of each of those as well." (Richardson, 1994 p.522) I see artists or songwriters and performers as having the potential to swing picks and join in chipping at the cement box. These artists stimulate imagination, and can contribute to the vision of transformed relationships to others.

One of those writers is Susan Aglukark. She is an Inuit woman who writes about social justice and has written a song that I feel contributes to a vision of a transformed relationship between humans.

"O Siem"

O siem
we are all family
o siem
we're all the same
o siem
the fires of freedom
dancing in the burning flame

siem o siyeya
all people rich and poor
siem o siyeya
those who do and do not know
siem o siyeya
take the hand of one close by
siem o siyeya
of those who know because they try
And watch the walls come tumbling down

siem o siyeya
all people of the world
siem o siyeya
it's time to make the turn
siem o siyeya
a chance to share your heart
siem o siyeya
to make a brand new start
and watch the walls come tumbling down

O siem
we are all family
o siem
we're all the same
o siem
the fires of freedom
dancing in the burning flame

by: Susan Aglukark, Chad Irschick. 1995. Aglukark Entertainment Inc.

The following song questions the way things are and contributes to thoughts and images of a transformed relationship to nature.

"Nothing but flowers"
here we stand looking out of my dream
waterfalls, Garden of Eden
two fools in love, so beautiful and strong
birds in the trees, smiling upon them
from the age of the dinosaurs 'cause we're run on gasoline
where, where have they gone?
now, there's nothing but flowers
there was a factory, now there are mountains and rivers
you got it, you got it
we shot a rattlesnake, now we got something for dinner
you got it, you got it
there was a shopping mall now it's all covered with flowers
you got it you got it
if this is paradise, I wish I had a lawn mower
you got it you got it
years ago, I was an angry young man
now I pretend that I was a billboard
standing tall by the side of the road
I fell in love with a beautiful highway
this used to be real estate, now it's only fields and trees
where, where is the town?
now it's nothing but flowers
the highways and cars were sacrificed for agriculture
I thought that we'd start over but I guess I was wrong
once there were parking lots
now it's a peaceful oasis
you got it you got it
this was a Pizza Hut
now it's all covered with daisies
you got it you got it
I miss the Honky Tonks, Dairy Queens and 7-Elevens
you got it you got it
and as things fell apart
nobody paid much attention
you got it you got it
I dream of cherry pies, candy bars and chocolate chip cookies
you got it you got it
we used to microwave
now we just eat nuts and berries
you got it you got it
this was a discount store
now it's turned into a corn field
you got it you got it
don't leave me standing here
I can't get used to this lifestyle....
by Talking Heads, Naked.

"Nothing but flowers" by David Byrne and his band the Talking Heads is a tongue in cheek look at the way things were, are, and could be. In a creative way they illustrate some of the paradoxes that occur with living. People who speak of, practice, and advocate simpler

living or ecological living do not want to "return to better times." It is impossible to return but I believe we can go forward in the cycle of time toward a better life- for all. Idealistic? Of course. There is no other option but to dream and hope. We need to re-focus our imagination and creativity on transforming first our vision of what our relationship to nature could be, and then to fight for that vision. To work toward it, figure out how to put it into practice. We need to cooperate. Some of us need to take up picks and chip away at the cement box from the place, inside or outside, that suits us best. Others need to work at alternatives there are a myriad of possibilities. We need to look, listen, touch, taste, smell and question the comforts of our home, our situation, our culture. It is necessary to de-romanticize the natural world and question the rest in order to develop transformed, radical ways of life for all beings as well as humans in and as nature.

We must build landscapes that heal, connect, and empower, that make intelligible our relations with each other and with the natural world; places that welcome and enclose, whose breaks and edges are never without meaning. Nature parks cannot do this work. We urgently need people living on the land, caring for it, working out an idea of nature that includes human culture and human livelihood. All of that calls for a new culture of nature, and it cannot come soon enough. (Wilson, 1991, p.17)

"Improve the world?" A "new culture of nature?" How do we know that we're on the right track? These ideas could be twisted to support a dictator, or to make money, to cut down a forest or to provide jobs. Wendell Berry addresses this idea of goals or standards that, at present, are primarily economic and suggests an alternative.

The aims of productivity, profitability, efficiency, limitless growth, limitless wealth, limitless power, limitless mechanization and automation can enrich and empower the few (for a while) but they will sooner or later ruin us all. The gross national product and the corporate bottom line are utterly meaningless as measures of the prosperity or health of the country. If we want to succeed in our dearest aims and hopes as a people, we must understand that we cannot proceed and further without standards, and we must see that ultimately the standards are not set by us but by nature. (Berry, 1992 p.12-13)

With a vision of ecological and social justice in mind and with nature setting the standards - living well in our places must start at home. In the process of living ecologically I must start with myself. Change on a mass scale is not likely to happen in my lifetime but it must begin somewhere. I start the process with myself and encourage you to begin- just begin.

Theoretical principles must be combined with the richness of the experiences and possibilities of real life situations. The Shakers provide a wonderful example of developing a vision and then going about doing it. This idea is expressed by Coleman (1989) in a quote from Marguerite Fellows Melcher;

One of the intangible legacies the Shakers left to the world is their demonstration that it is possible for man (sic) to create the environment and the way of life he wants, if he wants it enough. Man can choose. The Shakers were practical idealists. They did not dream vaguely of conditions they would like to see realized; they went to work to make these conditions an actuality. They wasted no time in raging against competitive society, or in complaining bitterly that they had no power to change it; instead they built a domain of their own, where they could arrange their lives to their liking.

Real experiences link theory to practice. A dialectic exists between philosophies and theory adding to ecological living, and ecological living also adding to the theory and philosophy. It is possible in the study of present versions of ecological living to see how we might remake society, fight oppression at all levels, and get from 'here to there.' In the lives of the coresearchers I can see, and hope to illustrate to you, how in their own living they are transforming their relationship to others.

Transformed Relationship To Others

Others - Human

There are a variety of themes that come out of the transcripts that relate to the interactions that the coresearchers have with other humans. One of the major themes was that of cooperation or working together.

Cougar and Emma talk about working together to provide self-government for their housing co-op and some of the advantages and challenges they face. Emma: "And everyone has one member, one vote so it's sort of a democratically set up community. There's different committees that work on different issues, a maintenance committee, a recycling committee and membership committee, participation committee, newsletter committee...Cougar: Finance. Emma: Finance, and that keeps the cost of the whole of the whole operation down because we're doing our own books, we're doing all our own maintenance. Some people put in a lot of time, other people don't put in nearly as much. Some people don't put in any, but they're always sort of egged on to participate in the operations of the co-op." (Cougar/Emma 85-95) They also discuss how the co-op manages finances in order to be more equitable. Emma: "It's non-profit, it's not set up for profit. So we charge ourselves a housing charge, which is paying off the mortgage and the maintenance and so forth. Also the housing charge that we charge ourselves is, there's a range to it, so we actually tax ourselves in order to create a subsidy pool for others who can't quite afford to be paying the true expenses for each unit. We're basically looking to

have a mixed income community, a third low income, a third medium, and a third high income. The high income people are kicking in more money so that the low income people can afford to be here. We also get some financial support from other levels of government. But you know people sometimes get the wrong idea - that there are some high income earners in the co-op and they're taking advantage of government subsidies and that's really not the case. We have a mixed community and have a variety of lifestyles, of singles, of families, of single parents, larger families, ideally older people, younger people. (Cougar/Emma 96-109) Cougar and Emma discuss what they see as benefits of living in a co-op. Emma: "The major point for me, why I find it an ecological lifestyle living in a cooperative is that we share things. We share lawnmowers. Cougar: Lawnmowers? You never cut the grass! Emma: I cut the grass!! We have a push mower. But we share other things, tools, and paint and the work and the maintenance, all get shared so we don't have to buy extra. Each unit doesn't have to buy their own things. Cougar: When you run out of baking soda or you need a couple eggs or something you go to your neighbors. Emma: It's really community oriented. People spend time together. Cougar: The design of the places too. I was thinking from an ecological perspective, it's quite compact so, for example, the heating bill. In our unit we keep our thermostat quite low so we end up taking heat from our neighbors. I mean the two side walls here aren't exposed to the elements, so it's sort of like cozying up, buildings cozying up to each other keeping each other warm and that makes a lot of sense from an ecological perspective too." (Cougar/Emma 55-69) Outside of their living situation Cougar and Emma relate their buying habits to the needs of other people in the wider community. "I guess in terms of the stuff that we buy we also try to as much as possible buy locally produced stuff. Because by investing locally you're supporting the local, scene and helping to employ people locally. Supporting your neighbors essentially, and I think that's an important, sort of rule of thumb to strive for." (Cougar/Emma 597-601)

Donna talks about how she and Myron cooperate with each other. "I want to start on one of the sheds, usually if I get started Myron will finish things." (Donna 150-151) She and Myron also talk about their relationships with neighbors that is similar to a co-op but it's informal. "Yeah we kinda (makes back and forth motion) We grow our potatoes up there because they have that lovely land where they keep the pigs....they use our root cellar, we're on their land. We bought a corner of their land." (Donna 326-332) Myron speaks of this as well. "Money doesn't change hands favours change hands. So any time somebody does something for you usually in return you do something for them. They'll do something for you and no money changes hands whether its getting your driveway plowed or if you

help butcher turkeys, you get a turkey or two. Usually it seems that the amount you get into is pretty liberal. People are pretty sensitive about having you help and they don't want to give the impression they're stingy or whatever. So my neighbors would never ever let me starve because I live in a rural situation like this they're better than brothers and sisters and so on...." (Myron 201-209) Dave and Fred discuss how getting work crews together to do some of the big jobs on their land, makes it easier. Dave: "Well a fun way to do it, like I said earlier, is we invite people out on the weekend and we do a little bit of work and we make it exciting. Instead of oh I gotta go pick roots again, we have fun, make it exciting. Fred: Ten people can pick a lot of roots in two three hours. Carmen: And you get to talk at the same time? Dave: And you can take a break if you feel like it. You're not punching a clock, get out there for eight hours or else. You know work at your own speed. Fred: Socializing and a party to look forward to around the campfire, a little wine and drums and whatever else and guitars and have fun. Dave: I think that it's very important to have the fun with the work." (Fred/Dave 659-669)

Along with working together the co-researchers talked about an exchange of knowledge and skills. Learning from other people and sharing what they know with others. Paula reflects upon some research she was involved in where she spoke to people about their thoughts and perspectives concerning an environmental issue. She also talks about how much she learns from working with other activists. "We just don't spend enough time learning what people have to say about their lifetime of observation. That was really worthwhile research and I'm still doing that. But we never have the time to to talk to these people and learn about their perspective. It's quite nice. It's nice to work with people who are creative and ambitious and have lots of um, lots of different backgrounds and are quite good at what they choose to do. I learn a lot that way. Learn how to deal with media and learn how to write letters to political people and how to write letters to the editor and learn how to analyze technical documents, things that are so exciting. (laughs)" (Paula 437-445) Dave talks about sharing knowledge in informal ways and by having fun. "I think what's important too is sharing what knowledge you have with people. You know, sort of encourage them. Try not to be forceful about it, but in a nice way try to encourage them. Show that you're having a good time and it's fun to do this and more people are apt to get involved." (Dave 154-157) Fred expands on this idea as well. "Part of being out there is not just for myself or for a few people, it's sharing. I believe sharing with those who want to learn. That's not like saying everyone has to do this. If someone comes along and says I'm interested I'd really like to learn what you're doing. I'd share with them the knowledge that I have. Not to say that I'm the expert at it and know all about it. There's

many many people that probably know more, it's just that I'll share what I have with them. And hopefully that person will, go on and maybe not do exactly what you're doing, but go on and basically change their attitude and help the planet along, as well." (Fred 366-374)

Cougar talks about connecting with other people from day to day on a serendipitous basis. "I've started to ride the bus a bit lately, to try to figure out how to improve the system. To critique it and sort of feel what's going on there. Yesterday I went out to catch the bus and one of the things that I found really attractive about riding the bus is on my way to the bus stop which is about six blocks away, I was able to stop in at two different locations and say hi to people. I suspect that that type of social interaction has been going on for millenia amongst people and we've lost that now that we have telephones and cars. You don't just drop in and say hi you know? Like at the greenhouse here, I bought some plants from them a few days ago, I dropped in and said hi, thanks for delivering the plants. They're great. See ya bye. Just on the way to the bus. And I dropped stuff off at River Press and said hello to them there. That to me I guess is the bonus of riding the bus. Which I never would have really figured out without actually doing it. But if I was in a car, I'd walk to the parking lot, maybe I'd see a neighbor, probably not, get in the car, drive to where I was going. Do what I'm doing and come back and not really connect with people, almost a serendipitous sort of connection, by chance you know bumping into people. Which is another really nice thing about cycling is that when you're out riding your bike especially in the warmer weather when a lot of other people are out doing it. You bump into people and you stop. You know 'cause you're right there and you're moving slowly enough and you stop and chat and you connect with people and you move on. And you know you can't do that in a car, you just don't do it. It's sort of humane on that level of reconnecting with other people." (Cougar 778-799) Cougar relates his interactions with other people to a larger vision. "The ecological destination that I envision for our society actually, has benefits in terms of I think that the communities would be happier more healthier, more convivial, more more liveable." (Cougar 1165-1168)

Moving further from learning from others and connecting with others on a casual basis, the coresearchers spoke about friendships and support from other people. Paula has friends that are involved in the same issues as she is. "But some of the nice things that I find, is this enormous family that I have in this environmental group. The kinds of attributes that people have that you never know until you discuss some topic that's of interest to you both." (Paula 431-434) Involvement in issues has led to further friendships. "So that on a local level has meant that I and my friends have met a lot of people. Throughout the

province at least, that are working on similar issues and developed quite strong friendship with these people." (Paula 141-143)

There are many challenges that come hand in hand with interaction with other people. The coresearchers spoke of some of these challenges from their own perspective. "It sort of takes strength to be able to portray some of those eco-attitudes, non-materialistic attitudes to people who need it. Who seem to be resistant to those different ideas. Who are currently, like many of us, totally sort of programed to this industrial consumption type of pattern, that we feel is necessary for our happiness. It doesn't take much argument to show anybody that material things doesn't really bring happiness." (Fred/Dave 176-181) Paula speaks about some of the challenges that she and Roger experience with their neighbors. "I think that we've broken a lot of ties with people over disagreements. So as far as our neighbours, I'm sure that they really don't care for us. Like on this road, 'cause we've had political disagreements and fenceline disagreements. I guess there's just the certain segment of the community that I have fairly good relations with and others I don't. And people know me on a first name basis in town and quite often it's because I've been on the other side of an issue from them. I try not to hold anything against people personally for the positions they take and just try to deal with their positions." (Paula 285-293) Fred and Dave discuss difficulties they've had with changes in their own lives as they relate to friends. "Flushing out an old culture and that means flushing out, groups of people who won't accept that, in terms of people for social interaction or friendship or whatever. So what I find is sometimes I tend to gravitate to a small sub-culture of people who are really seriously interested in environmental concerns, people who are members of environmental groups. And in a way that's good and a way it's not. Because here we are just looking for comfort zone, gaining comfort with people with like minded thinking. Sometimes I wish I could be braver and try to socialize more with people that do need converting, who are really genuinely interested if it's presented to them in the right way. Interested in this appropriate lifestyle." (Fred/Dave 87-97)

Cougar and Emma live in a fairly progressive community in Edmonton but discovered that it wasn't as progressive as they thought it was when discussing a new housing development. "We were really peripherally involved in trying to get them to consider alternative energy sources and not having people on the grid or on the sewage, having our own sewage system in that area. And tried to get them to think of those those principles for that whole area since it was a whole new development that was about to be built. But we were completely unsuccessful in getting that onto the agenda and people were more

concerned about whether there were garages or whether there were back alleys or whether there were sidewalks. Things like that and we weren't able to be successful at getting people to the next level of thinking ecologically. So I think that was a bit of a failure on our part and maybe could have gotten involved sooner and more more involved." (Emma2:335-346)

Paula reflects on some of the problems with humans and human relationships. How many of us there are on the earth and the impact that has. "I just see a big problem is that the earth cannot support the number of people that are on the earth and our consumption patterns. I guess that that's a real driving thought with me and that I can't help commenting on it." (Paula 385-387) "I think that we're living at the end of the relative luxurious stage of our development and entering a stage that may be very challenging. It will be so different from what we or our parents or grandparents were used to. That unless we change our values and want things we don't have to pay such a large price in destruction for, then it will be very hard to adjust. People don't like being denied what they want and I guess we have to decide if we want what we need." (Paula 392-398) "Actually it's dangerous not only for our own health but ultimately the health of the planet to be preoccupied with meaningless things that that are distractions from what's more important. That's building community and working towards, eco-existence. So part of the wholistic package is definately building community, building stronger relationships, better relationships with one's children and just better relationships with one's friends. To be a community person as much as possible. I think that is inseparable from the genuine eco movement." (Fred/Dave 209-216) Fred comments on how important it is to work together and to care for others- human and non-human. "It's really important, in that a support group kind of prods. Each person prods the other person in all the different ways. All the different wholistic aspects of eco-living. Which is taking care of yourself, your surroundings and ultimately the planet." (Fred 164-168)

Others - Nature

There are a few ways that the coresearchers expressed their relationship to nature. One way is through their relationship to animals. There is a wide range of thoughts and actions on this topic. Roger and Paula raise a few cattle that they sell for beef. They keep one steer to eat themselves. Although I did not talk to them specifically about eating animals I could see from how Roger cared for the cows and spoke about his care of them, that his animals have a good life on his farm. Myron and Donna trade work for meat with their neighbors but

they can't raise their own animals to eat. Donna talks about their animals throughout their life on their land. "...you don't need that much. Depending what you want to do. If you want cows. We've done that. We had a cow but they have calves and you have to do something with the calves. We're not big into disposing of animals I mean our chickens die of old age. We gave them all away finally. (laughs) or coyotes eat them. There's no point in feeding coyotes. But the neighbors raise pigs and if we raised a pig we'd never be able to get rid of it. So we don't do the animal part, we do the garden part." (Donna 299-305) Stop is struggling with the ideas and philosophy that surround vegetarianism. "Even chickens you know, I don't have any objection to letting chickens run free for a certain length of time and then you just collect them up and kill them and draw them and sell them for meat. I think they taste good that way. And the same with eggs I mean they should be allowed to run and lay their eggs and we collect them and eat them. I do have a problem with them being kept in pens and being shot full of hormones and just eat and die and don't have any other kind of life. I don't know what I expect, what kind of a life they would have. I mean I don't believe that animals are the same as humans. So it's a difficult problem." (Stop 476-484) Cougar and Emma on the other hand are very clear about their views on animals even though there are some paradoxes involved as we saw earlier. Emma: "I think I feel a lot more comfortable not eating animals for one, just not participating in that anthropocentric arrogant system that says that humans are allowed to eat animals. But sort of on the more ecological side, I believe that meat production is a real wasteful use of resources 'cause so many more parts of grain go into feeding the animals than actually come out in terms of parts of protein. It just seems ludicrous that we would be using so many more resources, oil and transportation and land and valuable resources to be growing grain and stuff, crops for animals, at a time when there's already so much unequal distribution of food on the planet. So many people that don't have enough food and if we could figure that out **first**. That should be our priority - is figuring out how to feed all the people on the planet and then if there are any resources left over then we can... no I still wouldn't eat animals. And also with regards to the oceans and birds in the sky and just how many fewer animals, and fish that there are on the planet, compared to not too many years ago. We're just depleting the stocks so rapidly and I don't want to participate in that sort of system. Cougar: I guess for me it's also the torture and exploitation of animals which is what got me being a vegetarian to begin with. Finding out about the confinement - the cows that never get out and roam the range and living cooped up in very small areas and blasted with chemicals and really tortured for years. I don't think it's very humane. We should respect them and not exploit them." (Cougar/Emma 276-297) "It's a

way to respect the earth and a way to recognize that we're, putting pressure on the earth and how we can lighten the pressure." (Cougar/Emma 365-367)

Another way that the coresearchers expressed their relationship to nature is through their feelings and experiences of seasons, elements and natural cycles. Myron and Donna express their connection to nature through their toilet. This may sound funny but actually makes a lot of sense. "That's one of the biggest disasters going for us is the fact that we dilute our waste. We dilute our waste with water. That's the biggest problem, plumbing is not ecological." (Donna 277-279) "OUT of sight, out of mind. Now over the years we know exactly where our waste has gone. (laughs) And there wasn't that much of it. We didn't dilute it with water and make a bigger problem." (Donna 284-286) Myron connects this problem with natural cycles of nutrients and minerals. "I've always claimed that the real ecological disaster is the flush toilet. I'm pretty sure that in the last 100 years we have not just suspended the reestablishing of the fertility of the soil we have actually mined it. That is, it goes in one direction and so here we are, we're at a stage where this has got to stop and we must perhaps even regain all the damage that was done." (Myron 445-449) "The end result is that your lifestyle ends up perhaps returning back what you take out of the soil rather than you know everything coming and coming and then it stops there." (Myron 352-354)

Roger and Paula are very attuned to the seasons and the different smells and feelings associated with them. "Springtime there's a whole different feeling. You know you kind of get in tune with the weather, with the climate, the light is different, the chickadees sound different. There are even smells that you begin to detect. Maybe barnyard smells would be the first ones. When it comes toward late April and May you can hear the birds that are waking you up in the morning at some ungodly hour and it's light and it's maybe four in the morning and there are all kinds of bursts of activity, and it comes so quickly that you can't keep up with it. We're sort of still in the winter and I haven't given much thought to spring, but you then find that your winter wear gets too warm and you're shedding all kinds of clothes by 11 o'clock. Once the bare ground comes through in patches and you're able to walk on the surface again and come to terms with things like MUD. (laughs) And it's nice to have all the visitors come, ducks, that frequent the area. It's something that's really great to look forward to." (Roger 116-129) Roger associates the seasons with certain kinds of work to do. "So bringing firewood in the shed, having that out of the way. That has it's beautiful smells of spring. Poplar smells like almond paste. So then you can enjoy the calves -the young spring calves running around and keep an eye on them."

(Roger 159-162) Paula talks about her flowers. "It's just sort of a meeting place for bees and stuff. (laughs) It's quite nice. Let it go wild." (Paula 100-101) In their city life, Cougar and Emma connect with nature through gardening and cycling. "My environment is our house, our co-op place, to outdoors and it radiates out from where we spend our time. And to me, gardening and cycling are the best ways that I've found to connect back with the earth itself, with the actual environment that's right there. Gardening you know clearly because you're in the earth and you're feeling the energy of the earth and you're connected to it and you're working with it and so forth. With cycling it's more you're feeling the weather I guess. You have to look at the thermometer before you go outdoors and know what the temperature is. You have to dress for it, you feel it. If it's a windy day, you know it's a windy day. And it's important to know that. There's something there. You know, I don't know how to articulate it, but if it's a windy day, I think people should know that. You know if the river's frozen we should know that. If it's thawing and if the birds are out and if the geese are migrating and all that stuff which you really don't get in a car or in a bus. You have to be in the environment. You can't be disconnected from it by a pane of glass or by a bunch of plastic or metal. You have to be out there to feel and it's one of the joys for me of cycling. That you're actually, part of the environment and you're breathing the air and you're hearing and smelling and seeing and feeling and sensing." (Cougar 758-778) "And you appreciate so much more of the elements by riding a bicycle. You get to see the full moon, and you feel the wind and you get wet and you fall down in the snow. You know all of those things that you don't get to experience in a car." (Emma 733-737) Dave talks about living in the country. "Just being out there in the country in the forest. There's wildlife around there. There's two farms there so there's not extreme amounts of wildlife because of the farming. It has a nice little river that runs through it. Just being in this nice little environment. It's quiet and you have time to think and being out there for a week or two coming back to the city I feel real good. Real good about myself. But after being in the city for a month or two I sort of get lonely and want to go back out there again." (Dave 282-288)

Roger spoke specifically about the importance of transformed relationship to both other humans and to nature. He talked about this through the idea of a broader meaning for the word "environment." "Because I think we overlook the necessity, the importance of having a social environment as well. And that you can't have a natural environment without having a good social environment. So that what we're talking about then is everything. We're talking about say an urban environment. We're talking about how people interact, get along, cooperate. We're talking about politics. We're talking about

economics. How do we share the wealth - income distribution? We can't have the rich and the poor. We have these two dichotomies -we have the rich who consume all the, much of the resources, and then you have the poor who have to provide for themselves with a very compromised environment. This I think is a very important aspect that in some instances can be overlooked. We assume so much that when we talk about the environment to be the natural environment. To try and preserve and protect wildness and wild places which is fine, I'm not being critical of that. But we also have to come to terms with major issues." (Roger 507-520) "So it made me feel that, the social element is a very important aspect when looking at an environment. It's easy to see things in isolation. We talk about things now like the interconnectedness of the forest, Herb Hammond and so forth. Who I respect, but there's the interconnected web of social interaction. I think it's that, that got to me to thinking to where I am now - the idea that so much of what's going on is political." (Roger 573-579)

Citizen

The coresearchers addressed this idea of transforming relationships to others, and the political component of issues through using some form of the notion of being a 'citizen'. All issues of social and ecological justice are intertwined and there are an infinite number of approaches and ideas for solutions. For example a deep ecologist might focus on political and ecological issues surrounding mining, forestry or endangered places and species. Social ecologists might be politically active on issues anywhere from decentralizing governments to native land claims to preserving forests. Ecofeminists may be involved in lobbying governments for research into the environmental causes of breast cancer, or by setting up alternative women's health centers or by setting up a protest march to raise awareness about violence against women and animals. Bioregionalists may be focusing closer to where they live and working to improve local food production or to protect local waterways. Obviously issues overlap between philosophies. I find the interesting common denominator between these different view points is the commitment to people, to nature and to change.

Paula talks about her involvement with anti-nuclear issues moving into environmental issues. "I guess that many of the same people became involved in the environment group. It's just escalated in activities in the last twenty years the kinds of things a citizen is expected to do, to speak out." (Paula 156-159) Stop sees the role of being a citizen and speaking out as being vital. "There are things you can do to cut down on your impact on

the environment. I think one of the things that people could do is speak out when it comes to issues in the environment. And that's one of the things that I've always done throughout my lifetime." (Stop 84-88) Roger emphasizes the importance of being politically aware. "I would find it hard to, engage in conversations with people who are well meaning but who are not politically inspired. There's something missing there...." (Roger 582-585) Stop and I spoke of how people become politically inspired or good citizens. Stop: "... And that's how you learn. Carmen: Is from someone else? Stop: Yeah. That's how you learn, that's how you teach children for instance to be good citizens, you start when they're little. You tell them from the time they're able to understand how it is they have to do things." (Stop 430-434) This idea is echoed by the other coresearchers in their thoughts about being an example to others. Emma talks about living a consistent life and resisting consumer society. "And the more of a role model that I will be to younger activists. And the clearer I will be in my own, own direction and goals and you know just sort of wiping off. I think Cougar has been a real role model for me in that respect. He's so clear and focused that something like fashion doesn't even come into the equation. He's so far beyond that. And so I see myself as sort of working in the same direction and it's important to maintain that consistency and that resistance to the pop culture which is so destructive to the planet and to our culture and to society and to the social fabric of society....so yeah, it's resistance for sure." (Emma2-190-198) Cougar relates this concept to why he doesn't drive a car. The oil companies, "are off and they're doing their thing and I think it's horrible what they're doing but I'm not a part of it. You know on one level that's really all you can do. You can write all the letters you want and you can do all the lobbying you want, politicians and companies and so forth but in the final analysis what counts is what an individual does when they wake up in the morning and they go about their daily whatever they're doing. Over the course of that lifetime you're making choices all the time and sure one person's choices in the context of 5 billion people on the planet is not really, from an objective perspective, it's not that significant and maybe it doesn't even matter. But I guess from my perspective you know, other people look at you, you're setting an example. If you believe in things you can translate them into your day to day life." (Cougar 638-648) Emma talks about working toward living her beliefs. "Not only did I move out and become active in the activist community, all at the same time seven years ago. I became a true vegetarian at that point although my whole lifestyle, I was already a bicycle commuter, I was already health conscious, and environmentally conscious, but I wasn't living it yet, right." (Emma2:148-152) Roger speaks of this as well; "...a lot is in how that person lives his life. I think that's what it really gets right down to. To make that judgement." (Roger 618-619)

The purpose in being a citizen, trying to live your beliefs, working toward a transformed relationship to others is not only for personal benefit. Roger expresses this idea quite clearly. "I think an important aspect is that not only does a person live life the way they feel is compatible with their philosophy is also that they try and make things better for everyone as a whole...And ya like I was saying there's a certain outreach that's incumbent upon everyone...that is trying to contribute toward the whole to make things better. To make it a better place. It takes a lot of work, there are very few rewards but, it certainly, there's a lot of merit in that." (Roger 655-666) The coresearchers are citizens each in their own way, with their own focus, and utilizing their unique abilities to work toward social and ecological justice.

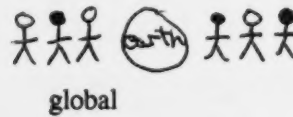
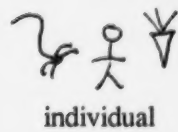
Inhabitants

The lives of the coresearchers are designed according to their needs and beliefs as well as around the characteristics and needs of the places they live. Our place constructs us and we construct our place. David W. Orr expresses this idea in an interesting way by discussing what he sees as the purpose of a liberal arts education. He uses the idea of dwelling and comparing and contrasting the 'resident' and the 'inhabitant' to illustrate his ideas.

...a genuine liberal arts education will equip a person to live well in a place. To a great extent, formal education now prepares its graduates to reside, not to dwell. The difference is important. The resident is a temporary and rootless occupant who mostly needs to know where the banks and stores are in order to plug in. The inhabitant and a particular habitat cannot be separated without doing violence to both. The sum total of violence wrought by people who do not know who they are because they do not know where they are is the global environmental crisis. To reside is to live as a transient and as a stranger to one's place and inevitably to some part of the self. The inhabitant and place mutually shape each other. Residents, shaped by outside forces, become merely "consumers" supplied by invisible networks that damage their places and those of others. The inhabitant and the local community are parts of a system that meets real needs for food, materials, economic support, and sociability. The resident's world, on the contrary, is a complicated system that defies order, logic, and control. The inhabitant is part of a complex order that strives for harmony between human demands and ecological processes. The resident lives in a constant blizzard of possibilities engineered by other residents. The life of the inhabitant is governed by the boundaries of sufficiency, organic harmony, and by the discipline of paying attention to minute particulars. For the resident, order begins from the top and proceeds downward as law and policy. For the inhabitant, order begins with the self and proceeds outward. Knowledge for the resident is theoretical and abstract, akin to training. For inhabitants, knowledge in the art of living aims toward wholeness. Those who dwell can only be skeptical of those who talk about being global citizens before they have attended to the minute particulars of living well in their place. (Orr, 1992 p.102-3)

The coresearchers are inhabitants and are continually evolving how to dwell in their places. We could start with dwelling in a place and let that construct us and our lives -enter into a

dialectic where harmony with place and other beings is the focus, rather than constructing an artificial world that exceeds our superficial needs - caters to our wants - and ignores the needs for existence of other beings and the biosphere that supports our lives, all life. Where, "Our role is not to idealize, protect or restrain but to care for each other and for nature in a way that truly expresses an authentic love for the natural and social worlds." (Heller, 1993 p.241) The idea of an inhabitant includes the role of being a citizen - combining living well in our place, with social justice and political, eco-activism. Activism on any level would work toward the opportunity for humans, and other beings, to exist, to have quality of life and to have a well place in which to dwell.



These symbols portray in simple drawings the interaction between humans and humans and humans in and as nature.

Figure 7: Transforming Relationships to Others

Satisfactions

Obtaining pleasure or satisfaction is of great importance in our culture. Berry in his essay "Economy and Pleasure" refers to the pleasure industry and what that tells one about our society.

It may be argued that our whole society is more devoted to pleasure than any whole society ever was in the past, that we support in fact a great variety of pleasure industries and that these are thriving as never before. But that would seem only to prove my point. That there can be pleasure industries at all, exploiting our apparently limitless inability to be pleased, can only mean that our economy is divorced from pleasure and that pleasure is gone from our workplaces and our dwelling places. Our work places are more and more exclusively given over to production, and our dwelling places to consumption. (Berry, 1990 p.139)

Pleasure has become an industry creating products for consumption. Nature has become a component of that industry through tourism, and is available for consumption. "The modern history of nature tourism is a history of altered landforms and changed ideas and experiences of the non-human. Broadly speaking it involves a shift from a pastoral approach to nature to a consumer approach." (Wilson, 1991 p.24) I would argue that learning to live well in our places or becoming inhabitants represents a pastoral approach to nature rather than a consumer approach. Berry argues that

...in the right sort of economy, our pleasure would not be merely an addition or by-product or reward; it would be both an empowerment of our work and its indispensable measure. Pleasure Ananda Coomaraswamy said, perfects work. In order to have leisure and pleasure we have mechanized and automated and computerized our work. But what does this do but divide us ever more from our work and our products-- and in the process, from one another and the world? (Berry, 1990 p.140)

Living ecologically is not dividing our lives into compartments, not separating ourselves from nature and each other, but combining working and playing. As we all know, life is not all pleasure, is not all excitement or satisfaction. In each of our lives we enter the dialectic around pleasure and tedium. What is pleasure for some may be tedium for others. What is pleasure for one many be boring for another. This is the search. To live fully in pleasure and tedium. Roger talks about the contrasts and trade offs between pleasure and tedium in his day to day life. "I've got wood now that has been cut that's ready to split and I should split that while it's still on the cold side before it gets warm. Carmen: Right, it splits easier when it's cold? Roger: Oh yeah, yeah. It's a pleasure. When things are working in your favour it's a pleasure. So the object is to try to work with the weather and not try to do something that goes against the characteristics of the weather. That's like trying to fight the impossible. So I try to keep things as pleasurable as I can, in spite of, the

tedium of the chore. Carmen: Do you find it tedious or do you like it? How do you feel about it? Roger: I guess it has its moments. There are times when it's really exhilarating, a beautiful day, you're out there, you've got a wonderful view, there's nothing better. Then there are occasions at the other end of the scale, where you're wondering why you're doing it. You're out there really braced against the elements when you could be in bed where it's warm. Particularly at calving time when you have to keep a watch on the expectant mothers particularly if they're having their first time calf. And you're getting out of bed when it's miserably cold and having to go out there to ensure that that two year old is not having problems calving. Because you'll regret it because you'll not have a live calf. So there are moments when it's terrifically exhilarating when it's wonderful and then other moments when you've got tedia. It's difficult to understand what you're doing at times. So you hope that the good times offset the bad. Because the rewards aren't there in the long term. So often, particularly in farming, these last ten, fifteen years, the rewards just haven't been there. So you're looking at self-reward. The bottom line might be if it doesn't make you feel like the effort is worth it because you're not going to get the monetary gain. So very often things going on around you make you question whether it's worth the effort at times." (Roger 53-80) For every pleasure there is tedium. Tedium and pleasure may occur at the same time. Rewards may be the internal benefits of satisfaction rather than in money earned.

We need to focus on nurturing our ability to live fully. Conserving nature restrains ourselves in a romantic love of nature. "...when we look closer, we see that the ultimate imperative is not to "conserve" nature, but to release human potential for radical change within society." (Heller, 1994 p.238) One way of releasing this potential is through the power of the erotic. The erotic is a source of power and information within our lives that has been suppressed in all people, women, and men. It has been suppressed by being labelled as irrational or by being relegated to sexual relationships within the confines of the bedroom, the sex trade or the Internet. But the erotic can have an alternative definition that transcends the traditionally sexual or pornographic labels. Audre Lorde defines the erotic in a much more liberatory way- as a way of recognizing the erotic as power. "...in providing the power which comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person ...the open and fearless underlining of my capacity for joy." (Lorde 1984 p.56) "The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings. It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognized its power, in honor and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves." (Lorde, 1984 p.54) So rather than taking

the pleasure out of our work in order to have pleasure later and instead of relegating our sense of the erotic to the bedroom we can begin to live erotically in our everyday tasks. "For the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing. Once we know the extent to which we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion we can then observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closer to that fullness." (Lorde, 1984 p.54-55) Living ecologically is a way to reclaim pleasure in little everyday things. To feel fully in the doing.

On foggy mornings, Charlotte's web was truly a thing of beauty. This morning each thin strand was decorated with dozens of tiny beads of water. The web glistened in the light and made a pattern of loveliness and mystery, like a delicate veil. (White, 1952)

Each of the coresearchers expresses their pleasure, their experience of living, their personal satisfactions in their own unique way.

Roger

"I'm happy if things work right and I'm able to do that because there's nothing as rewarding or more satisfying as getting off a good crop. Any kind of crop. It makes everything worthwhile, when things are working well, you're not having any breakdown. There's a lot of pleasure in seeing that something that you're putting up looks good and smells good and you know it'll taste good to the cattle." (Roger 227-232) "...so that is one benchmark of a good year is getting a good hay crop off. And that might be second to getting a good calf crop where you're not losing any calves, where you haven't had any problems with illness with those calves. When you get that in the spring and you get a good hay crop, and things are looking really up (laughs)" (Roger 238-242) Roger talks about the importance of beauty in life. "Because I think if we had more rewarding lives we wouldn't need as much. We wouldn't really have to gratify ourselves by going out and buying this and buying that and at the same time kill ourselves in getting the money so that we could gratify our insatiable appetites. If we made our place beautiful around us we wouldn't necessarily need those distractions- like televisions." (Roger 631-636)

Myron

It's very hard to put into words the pleasure that Myron experiences from learning all the time and from being in the boreal forest. One way to describe it might be that he seems at home. Myron also experiences a lot of pleasure out of working for himself and perceives himself as fairly well off. "But I would say that on the average the poverty level is around \$25 000/year and if you aren't making more than that you're below the poverty level. Well

I think that in the last ten years my best year was \$18000 and that would put me below the poverty level but it really doesn't. (Myron 186-189)

Cougar

There are many things in Cougar's life that he finds satisfying most of which are connected to him living his beliefs. "I guess for me it's all well and good to talk about things, about a healthy environment, or whatever, but there's a real I guess satisfaction to as much as can translate that into my own lifestyle and practicing my beliefs." (Cougar 297-300) "If there's a group of those companies out there that I really don't appreciate what they're doing on a global level, the most powerful thing that I can do as an individual is not give them money. Because they operate on money, if you pay them for the gasoline and you pay them for the car you are basically contributing to what they're doing.... as an individual I get real satisfaction in not contributing to what GM or or uh or you know Exxon are doing to the planet." (Cougar 629-638) "It's it's a real joy to know that riding a bicycle you're not polluting the local environment or the global environment. That's really important to me. That I'm not participating in that, and that in fact I'm helping to create a more liveable and humane city by riding a bicycle. Then in turn I'm sort of an example to other people and inspiration and talk to people about bikes, so I'm sort of a teacher and that's really empowering." (Cougar 828-833) "There is I guess I find there's fun in striving towards that perfection, it's not work it's not this that I'm twisting my own arm behind my back all the time to do the next thing. It's you know I'm comfortable, we're comfortable hanging up bags and with our worm composter and it works for us and you know what else do we need to do." (Cougar 666-670) "...growing our own food, I mean our grandparents they all grew their own food. Being connected to the earth in that way, through your garden is incredibly powerful. Actually planting that seed and the food growing out, it's marvelous. I still marvel at it every year. Trying to dress ecologically you get connected back in with the climate and the weather and that whole cycle of things that for millenia our species has been doing that. It's been a break over the last you know 50-75 years that real massive break of our connection to the environment so, thinking in these ways I think really connects us back over time with our species and our connectedness with the other life forms on the planet." (Cougar 558-567)

Fred

"I find a lot of satisfaction in a lot of different areas but I feel right or wrong, I guess smug in that I feel that I'm going in the right direction. I feel that I'm with a group of people that's going in the right direction in terms of solving a lot of different little problems that you could talk about social problems or could talk about environmental problems. I feel that the eco concept, you know working on living the eco-way solves so many of those problems. I just feel really good that I'm going in the right direction. I'm discovering things too, attempting to eliminate you know the passive activities in my life, learning to play a musical instrument, and whatever. There's all kinds of different joys, hidden joys. I feel that my quality of life is improving. I'm doing more quality things, I'm hoping that I broke the spell of workaholism. I'm getting more and more free time by eliminating some of my materialistic hangups. More time to relax. I sleep more now, I uh I play more now than I did two years ago. I have more fun. I don't have any payments, I don't have any fancy car I don't have any toys. Simple. I have no problems with the bills every month and I don't make a big pile of money. I've even reduced how much I make in my own company. Even though the company's payroll is increasing with people's raises. I find I just don't need it as much. Sometimes I take more but usually that's for the something that's going on at the land. Another good, pleasant sort of aspect of pursuing this lifestyle is some of the wonderful, I feel, people I'm meeting in this sort of pursuit are more, to me are more genuine, or just a wonderful group of people." (Fred 465-486)

Dave

"It's just helping someone else I think I like most about it. It's not important to me to see if I can make a bunch of money. It's important to help someone else to change and hopefully they will go on and pass on the word themselves. There's been a lot of personal things like to me it's not like a job where I'm going to work. It's something I like to do." (Dave 494-499) "Somedays I look really forward to getting out there and doing some things and working with plants. It's a great feeling of accomplishment when, you can grow your own vegetables or herbs right from the start, until you harvest them. Until when you make some medicines, until after you use them. Until after if you store away your own vegetables in the root cellar, there you've got your food. I think things that I like is that I've become a lot healthier person from it too because I'm in a happy mood most of the time." (Dave 513-520)

Stop

"I like to crochet and knit and sew and spend time with my grandson reading him books and stories." (Stop 512-513) "I think the Grannies is the thing that gives me the most pleasure right now as far as my activism goes. I also sit on the board of the Green City group and on the board of the Nature Committee, and that does take time as well. The Grannies I think is, as far as activism goes, is the most important thing. I still get calls from Joe and Jim for instance to get involved in campaigns at city hall so I do that." (Stop 528-533)

Donna

Donna lives a very self-directed life. She has many responsibilities and chores but she decides what to do everyday. "Well, it's a very self indulgent lifestyle you know. You just do whatever you want to do when you wake up that morning (said coyly, sarcastically laughs)" (Donna 29-30) "Well now it's really easy we just got rid of the chickens so I don't have chores. I might have to go out and throw hay to the horse once in awhile, feed the cats and feed the birds, make sure the cats have water cause it's winter now, it's really easy. I can read or weave or do whatever I want to do." (Donna 37-40)

Emma

Emma is very involved in her activism work and gets a lot of pleasure in being involved. "And I feel that I'm fortunate that I'm doing very meaningful work that I really enjoy. And I'm seeing progress all the time in terms of development within the city and city council. I feel that I'm fortunate that I'm able to create change and help set the agenda and push the system. I don't feel like a peon, I feel like I'm moving the agenda along." (Emma2:173-177) "And the other real bonus that I love about cycling and not driving a car is that I get daily exercise, everyday. Without having to take time out of my day to go to the exercise gym or something. Everyday I get exercise, and I looovvvee that! (Emma 800-803)

Paula

Paula gets a lot of satisfaction out of both her formal and informal work and out of how and where she lives. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of the order of the work I do and uh being able, able to organize in a group and to uh having remembering things and being kind of a resource bank not necessarily in my file system but in my mind I can recall things or make connections and other than that, just having the satisfaction of living in a place that's very beautiful and being relaxed there." (Paula 333-338) "One thing that satisfies me, is

creating something for myself and not depending on someone else to do it for me. Whether it's knitting or making clothes or making butter, or raising animals that you eat or raising food that you eat or creating an order, in my life is something that I like." (Paula 324-327) "It's so nice not to have much. You know, Just to be able to have no encumbrances." (Paula 263-4) "Sense of freedom in not needing things" (Paula 509) "So I guess one big satisfaction is knowing that you can survive if there's a real crunch economically. That you probably can make it because, we lived on very little, and we don't need to buy things to have satisfaction out of life." (Paula 353-356) "There's a lot of satisfaction in living simply - not being in the common man's dilemma of never having money." (Paula 513) "I don't have a poverty mentality" (Paula 508) She laughs and tells me that she likes to indulge herself with luxuries like butter not margarine. "So here I am living in this lap of luxury which for other people isn't. But I can sit down and have some food, something that I couldn't get at a restaurant, because it's such high quality. Going out and breathing nice air. Going out at three in the morning and having the sense of security that no one's going to be walking up the driveway you know. That I can walk anywhere at night and you just have to be careful that you don't step on a porcupine or something. It's really nice and it's a luxury that I don't know how long we can provide that for people. With world tension and world population.....Just to go out and hear the owls in the middle of the night, setting their territories it's really great to know that there's a lot more things going on that we forget about." (Paula 398-408)

Living erotically has nothing to do with how much money one has or one's standard of living. It does have to do with quality of life. I learned a great deal about living erotically from a woman named Bloomie that I met in the slum of Kingstown, St. Vincent. I would weave my way through the alleys of the slum everyday for lunch. Most days I would see Bloomie and I got a small glimpse into her life. I would not in any way romanticise or underestimate the difficulty of her life but I think that it is also dangerous to "judge" the way she lives by typical North American standards. Bloomie washed clothes to earn money for her family of two elementary age boys. She swept the streets, cooked and cleaned and laughed and talked and visited with her neighbors and friends. She had a room to sleep in, a kitchen to share, food to eat, clothes to wear and people around her who would not let her starve or be sick alone. For me Bloomie epitomizes the idea of the erotic. She took pleasure in her sons' bright minds, in earning enough money to buy a beer on a Friday, from quick and cutting comebacks, to teasing remarks, and from "chatting up" the white girl. Bloomie has perfected the art of living poorly because that is how she survives both

physically and emotionally. Wendell Berry writes about the concept of living poorly. "We must achieve the character and acquire the skills to live poorer than we do.

We must waste less, we must do more for ourselves and each other."(Berry 1989 p.28)
David W. Orr (1992 p.161) expands on this idea.

Living poorly, as Berry puts it, is not the same things as living in poverty. The distinction is that between bloatedness and prosperity made by Thoreau, Gandhi, and Schumacher. To live poorly but not in poverty will require different skills and different knowledge. People and communities with less cash to spend will need to know how to:

1. Distinguish basic needs from wants
2. Reduce dependents
3. Take full advantage of the free services of nature
4. Use locally available resources
5. Rebuild local and regional economies, and most importantly,
6. Rebuild strong, participatory communities

The coresearchers have the above skills and live poorly but not in poverty.

Living poorly or living ecologically as illustrated by the experiences of the coresearchers can have an element of the erotic within it. When we begin to understand, search for and live the power of the erotic within our own lives, then will we begin to move toward our fullest potential as humans as nature. "Only when we begin to uncover the potential for freedom, diversity, and self-determination among all human beings will we begin to understand and truly appreciate the power and beauty of the natural world." (Heller, 1994 p.241) Each coresearcher experiences different satisfactions and pleasures. They all in some way contribute, in a practical sense, to our understanding of the idea of living poorly and living erotically. Maybe it's the same thing?



symbols of satisfaction

Figure 8: Satisfactions

CHAPTER V

BUILDING A WEB WITHIN A WEB

Imagine one very large web that encompasses the earth. Now imagine a series of layers of webs that represent ecosystems, social systems, and then yet smaller webs that represent communities and then tiny webs that represent individual lives. The coresearchers are in the process of building webs within other webs- creating and strengthening connections between humans and humans, humans and other living entities, humans and living systems, humans and places. Weaving a tapestry of webs that heal and connect relationships, and landscapes that are fragmented.

A Webbed Spiral: A Process of Living Ecologically

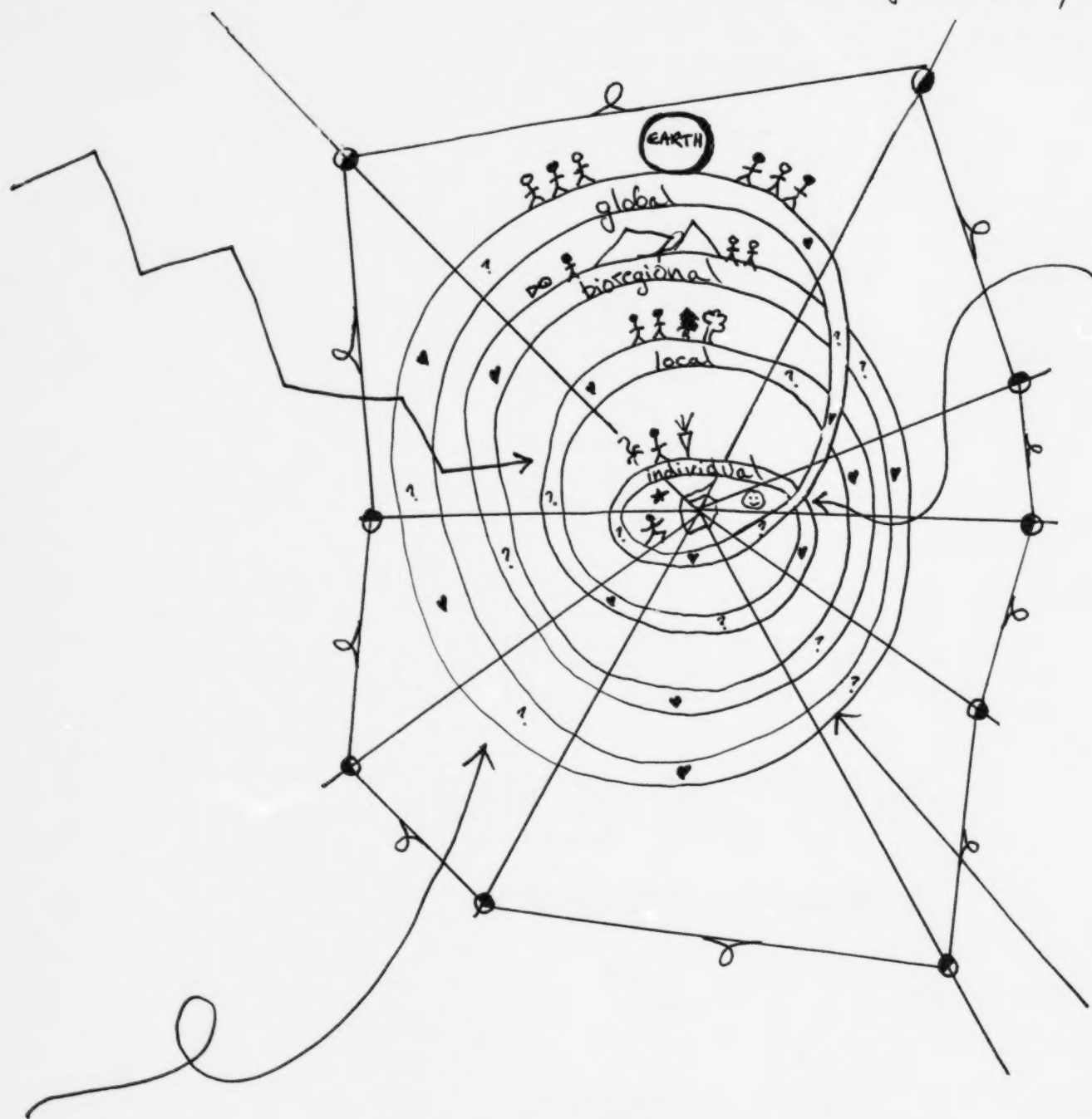


Figure 9. Model

ADD PICTURE OF MODEL

Summary Of The Model

A Webbed Spiral - A Process Of Living Ecologically.

Models usually attempt to simplify and reduce the information or experience that they represent. With 'a webbed spiral' I am attempting just the opposite. I am attempting to illustrate the complexities and many layers of the process of living ecologically. The purpose of the model is to describe rather than explain. It could never capture all of the diversity and insights within ecological living. To understand the full meaning of the model it would be best to read about it's development throughout the thesis. This is merely a summary.

- * The arrows coming from all directions represent the different possible points that one could start from and levels one could enter in the process of living ecologically.
- * The black web represents the interconnectedness of all things. The circles where strands join that are half black and half white represent paradoxes. The loops in the middle of the outside strands represent dialectics or tension.
- * The spiral in the centre of the web represents the evolving nature of living ecologically. It is non-hierarchical - the inner circles are not any closer to living ecologically than the outer circles but represents change and progression.
- * The question marks and hearts within the spiral represent caring and questioning. The two solid lines of the spiral represent action.
- * The four rings of the spiral represent the four levels on which caring, questioning and action occur: individual, local, bioregional, global.
- * The drawings of people, animals and plants represent a transformed relationship to others. Humans to humans and humans to nature.
- * The centre of the spiral containing the star, the happy face, the dancing person and the web represent satisfactions, erotic living and the experience of living ecologically.
- * When the model is looked at as a whole it is fairly confusing, complex and non-linear- so is life.

The Garden of Living Ecologically

I find it useful to think of ecological living as a garden. A garden is a place to grow some food and flowers. A garden can be a place where humans and nature can interact and foster each other. The garden fits in with the place one lives, frost free days, sun, water, heat, soil. I garden all year round. I select and keep seeds and bulbs, dreaming a vision of what the garden will look like. In the spring I begin with preparing the soil - digging in the dirt. I use our wastes that have become compost to provide nutrients for the plants. I plan the beds and plant the seed and wait. Some things don't germinate. Some things don't work out the way I planned. The garden needs nurturing. Some plants and areas need more time, attention, water, nutrients, while others flourish on their own. Being in the sun and feeling the earth and seeing the plants grow nurtures me. Plants that grow well together, that get along, help each other, protect each other, are planted together.

Hoeing and weeding seems to be never ending. A weed may be useful or beautiful, or lovely all on its own but doesn't belong where it's growing. Pulling weeds out of my garden, hoeing, hand pulling, is like getting rid of bad habits in my life like driving too much or buying overpackaged food. I don't use herbicides so I need to think of creative/work with the land ways, to get rid of weeds - or better yet use them to my advantage. The thing about weeds is they come back again and again, they creep in from the edges, making our gardens smaller, they grow in the rows and take away nutrients, water, and sun that the vegetables need, they reduce the harvest.

If I let the weeds get out of control then I've lost- my garden smothers, withers, doesn't produce- becomes ugly, unsatisfying. I end up working for money to buy food. We all have weeds in our lives. Weeding takes patience, perseverance, time and learning, all of which are lifetime processes. Harvest happens all year long, from the first tender lettuce, spinach and radishes to the peas, beans, carrot thinnings, beet greens, tender herbs, to new potatoes, carrots, corn, squash, sunflowers, and the endless zuchinni. The garden extends beyond the yard out into the fields and valleys, connecting a web of living things. For example there are the wild berries that are a surprise on a walk or a treat when my favourite patch in the gully has a great year. The harvest is the fruit that gets canned, the cucumber pickles, the root cellar brimming full, the dried herbs and braids of garlic and onions all squirrelled away for a cold winter's supper or a big family dinner. There are other less tangible benefits of the garden. Soil gets between my toes, under my fingernails and

ground into my knees and connects me to the earth. The sun, water, soil and seeds combine to create food for my body and my soul.

The left over parts of the garden, like stems and leaves go into the compost to become food for next year's garden. The perennials get mulched and things are ready for winter. Some herbs get moved indoors to last the winter and I begin growing sprouts in a jar for salads instead lettuce in the garden. The wonderful thing about gardening is that there's always the winter to rejuvenate, plan, dream, and next spring to start all over again. This year I think I'll plan this and try this and move this over here and start these plants inside in March. That variety of carrots wasn't so great but I'll try another kind this time. I get ideas from other people, talk about gardening and visit their gardens and we trade cuttings and bulbs and seeds. Maybe I'll take a class, or lobby the city to provide space for community gardens. Gardens are never the same from year to year - we change - the garden changes, people and projects and interests move in and out of our lives. Planting those tiny seeds is having faith in little things. Faith and hope that the potential for growing and living fully and richly and full of flavour and nutrients will be realized.

In talking with my coresearchers I could get a glimpse of how their lives, like gardens, have changed and grown, evolved, and become a process of dwelling in their places. The coresearchers are in an process of discovering what works for them and with the place where they dwell. They then go about doing it, and doing it and doing it over and over in spirals and circles and cycles.

Definition

I do not think that it is possible to come up with a rigid definition of ecological living. If living ecologically is partially defined as fostering greater levels of freedom, diversity and wholeness for humans and non-humans then there cannot be only one type of ecological lifestyle. To quote Stop, "Well as far as living an ecologically good lifestyle I think that's sort of a relative thing. Everyone has their different ideas of what an ecologically friendly lifestyle would be." (Stop 6-8) Naess discusses this idea in relation to his own ecosophy.

You are not expected to agree with all of its values and paths of derivation, but to learn the means for developing your own systems or guides...Saying 'your own' does not imply that the ecosophy is in any way an original creation by yourself. It is enough that it is a kind of total view which you feel at home with, 'where you philosophically belong'. Along with one's own life, it is always changing. (1989 p.37)

The ways of living, as you have seen with the coresearchers, will be very individual and personal but there are common themes. I think that it is vital to look at the developmental nature of living, its evolution, in order to understand what a particular ecological way of living consists of. It is problematic to think of ways of living, as a dichotomy; this is living ecologically, this isn't. Rather I think it would be more useful to think of ways of living as diversified. One could look at what within a way of living is ecological and what has the potential to become ecological. I think that this small foray into qualitative research of ecological living has allowed me to postulate the following definition of ecological living:

Ecological living develops, evolves and continues to evolve, in harmony with other parts of nature and other people. Someone trying to live ecologically would have a variety of paradoxes and dialectics to make decisions about. The process of living ecologically occurs as an inner and outer process of caring, questioning and acting. It also can occur on different levels: individual, local, bioregional and global. The goal of ecological living is to foster greater levels of freedom, diversity and wholeness for humans and non-humans. This way of living would reflect a transformed, less alienated relationship to others- all living things and humans as nature - and would result in the corresponding satisfactions and pleasures. The concepts of dwelling well in a place as an inhabitant, and living poorly, would interact with the characteristics of the eco-community, and the situation, skills, hopes and desires of the individual(s) living it to create a way of living ecologically. Individuals within an ecological society would work toward creating a self that is both for self and for other, by creating a society which is both for humans and for other living things and the corresponding support systems.

The Untold Stories

There are many people I could have interviewed. The further I went in this project, the more people I met who would have been great to interview. But a project, if it is ever to be finished, must have limits. "Knowing a culture, even our own is a never ending story." (VanManen, 1988 p.119) The people that I did not interview contributed, in a silent way to this thesis through talking with me, listening to me and showing me the way they live. Many people helped me to develop and synthesize my ideas and thoughts.

There are additional untold stories within the transcripts and lives of the people that I did interview. The transcripts from my conversations with the coresearchers were rich and thick and full of ideas and concepts and themes that would have been wonderful to explore. There's that never ending story again. Some of the themes I explored inadvertently through other connected themes. You can see glimpses of those unaddressed themes in the stories of the coresearchers. I also eliminated other themes that I decided were beyond the scope of this project. Still other themes were implied or hinted at through some small phrase and would have required further conversations in order to explore in an adequate way. Some of the themes that were not fully addressed were;

- the idea of active and passive leisure
- activism
- money
- outside influences
- philosophies of the coresearchers
- security
- self education
- self-reliance/self-sufficiency
- experiences of time

My Own Web

In many ways the writing of this thesis has been part of the process of the weaving of my own web. I care and question and make connections, and make choices and exhibit paradoxes in my life. I'm working on the action part. It's difficult. My neighbours expect me to have an impeccable yard but I feel that this is working against the processes and cycles of nature. I explain to people that the pile at the back fence is not a pile of junk, it's a compost pile so that leaves and grass from the yard and food scraps from the kitchen don't go to the landfill site. I give our returnable bottles to the streetman who has our alley on his route. Our recycle box goes out once a month. I ride my bike or walk. I sometimes drive our truck. I do all those "50 simple ways to save the earth" and more but it is not enough. I have big questions. How in the society where I live, can I maintain my connection to other humans and other beings? How can I reduce my negative impact on the earth but at the same time realize that there are much larger forces at work that my own actions have minimal effect on? How can I nurture myself and my family and live erotically in a place where nature and pleasure have become commodities? Do I escape 'back to the land' or do I stay and work within the system for political change? Is some combination of the two possible?

The thing with webs is that they can connect and join together but a spider has to be careful that it doesn't get tangled and caught and paralyzed in it's own web or the web of another. I often find myself in a tangle of strings that are all connected somehow but I have managed to roll around in them so much that the issues are tangled and incomprehensible. I have been paralyzed. In a meeting one day where a group of graduate students were discussing environmental problems someone said, "It's depressing - you just want to stay in bed for a few months." I replied, "I've tried it, it doesn't work." Everyone laughed. It was meant as a joke but it was also true. In my struggle with clinical depression, the problems of the world press down on me and some days hold me in my bed until four in the afternoon. They weigh me down and I exhaust myself trying to carry them around. They press down on me and squeeze out the tears. They open up into a huge pit and I spiral downward to the bottom and see no way out. I cannot think clearly or control my emotions.

New research connects depression to a chemical imbalance in the brain. So I've been on anti-depressant medication for one year. I smile at the Prozac jokes because they are told by people who have never been depressed. Depression, in my own humble opinion, is a combination of physiological and psychological issues or imbalances. After all, I have a

web inside myself connecting all parts of me together in mysterious ways. My immune system is suppressed as well- I catch every cold or flu that comes around and I have visited the doctor more times in the past year than in my entire life. I have gained weight. I have no motivation for work or exercise. I feel unable to make decisions. Deciding what to cook for supper is a major exercise. My emotions are erratic- relationships with my family and my partner are strained. I go to counselling and learn about assertiveness and family issues and using dreams to access my subconscious. I begin to understand and feel happier but then I spiral down into the pit again. I am trying but I am meeting a part of myself that I did not know before.

One day in late February it was like the lights came back on in my head. I sat at my computer and out came my thesis. I can think. I can laugh for real again. I still fall into the pit once in awhile but not as often or for as long. I have the energy to interact with people again. I am transforming once again and new connections have been made in my inner web.

Well Carmen, why are you writing about all your dirty laundry, all your self indulgent navel gazing, and existential angst? I am not writing this to create sympathy for myself but because I don't want depression to be a stigma. Because I now have great empathy for others who are depressed. I want to let other depressed people know that they are not alone. To explain that the experience of depression is part of my thesis and part of my journey in understanding the process of living ecologically.



Figure 10: Self-Portrait

This self-portrait was drawn with my left (non-dominant) hand, with my eyes closed. I find this technique an interesting way to access another part of myself and I feel the silly drawing that resulted captures my essence.

One Last Strand Of Silk

By now you are probably surprised that I haven't quoted reams and reams of statistics about what's wrong with the world. That is intentional. Every one of us can think of many things that could be done to create a vision of a new world on some level. And that change is up to you and to me. Preferably we can begin the process of change from the grassroots.

..top-down solutions are often inflexible, destructive, and unworkable. Even if this were not true, the best policies in the world will not save ecologically slovenly, self-indulgent people who are not likely to tolerate such policies in any case. In other words, the constituency for global change must be created in local communities, neighbourhoods, and households from people who have been taught to be faithful first in little things. (Orr, 1992 p.31)

I have hopes that you, will continue the analysis on the basis of your own life experiences and will begin to see how the themes or principles or ideas could apply to your own circumstances. Hopefully you can see how to begin a web of your own within the larger web on the earth. I do not want to convince you of anything, only you can do that. But, I do hope to inspire you and encourage you. Start anywhere you want- anywhere that makes sense in your life. "...it's up to you. What seems easiest, most obvious, or most urgent to you? Start there." (Russell, 1988 p.229) You could use the coresearchers as examples, or use the model as a vague map of how to go about living ecologically. Begin by imagining how the world could be, care about it, question the way things are and get your self into action. Spin a web.

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APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT STUDIES

THE EXPERIENCE OF ECOLOGICAL LIFESTYLES

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The Experience of Ecological Lifestyles

Investigators: Carmen Ditzler [ph.(403) 440 2455]

Harvey Scott [ph.(403) 492 7173]

The purpose of this research project is to increase our understanding of how people are living ecologically. This would be people who are working toward living in ways that are more in harmony with the natural cycles and processes of the earth and in harmony with each other. I am interested in the experiences of people who are living in ways that limit their negative impacts on their environment and who enhance the positive ones. This does not mean that you have to be living the perfect life- I am interested in what your present life is like and how you think and feel about it.

This project would involve me coming to where you live, or work at a time that is convenient to you, and staying with you for part of one day. I would like you to show me things that you do. I would then like to sit down with you for one or two hours and talk with you about your life and how you came to do what you do. This conversation will be taped and later transcribed. In order to protect your anonymity, you will be asked to choose a code name. The tapes, and their associated transcripts will also be assigned a code name and stored in a locked cabinet. Upon the final defense of the thesis these tapes will be erased. After the visit and interview, the information gained from your participation will be made available to you, so that you may comment on my interpretation.

The final research report, including anonymous quotations will be available to all participants and will be presented as a Master's Thesis. The research findings may be published in a journal and every effort to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects will be made. Although there may appear to be no tangible benefits to you, it is my hope that you will enjoy our interaction and that this project, with your participation, will help us and others to understand more about more ecologically sensitive ways of living on the earth, and what that experience is like.

This is to certify that I, _____(print name) hereby agree to participate as a volunteer in the above named project.

1. I understand that I may withdraw from the study **at any time** without prejudice.
2. My identity will not be disclosed during my participation in the study or in any published results of the study.
3. I understand that should I have any questions related to any part of my participation in this project, my questions will be answered fully and to my total satisfaction by either of the principal investigators.
4. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer questions during the interviews or request that the tape recorder be shut off at any time.

Signed;

Participant _____ Researcher _____

Date _____